Commentary

Volume Seventy-five, Number Four, April 1983

How Important Is the PLO?

Daniel Pipes

The "Neutralism" of E.P. Thompson

Scott McConnell

Living without Health

Kevin G. Barnhurst

Still Life with Scar—A Story

Jacob Lampart

Milosz: Poetry and Politics

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MUSIC

Greatness & Decline of Richard Wagner

Samuel Lipman

FICTION

Anti-Americanism & Other Clichés

Joseph Epstein

BOOKS

John O'Sullivan/Lucy S. Dawidowicz/
J.B. Kelly/Robert Nisbet/Eliot A. Cohen/Michael Novak

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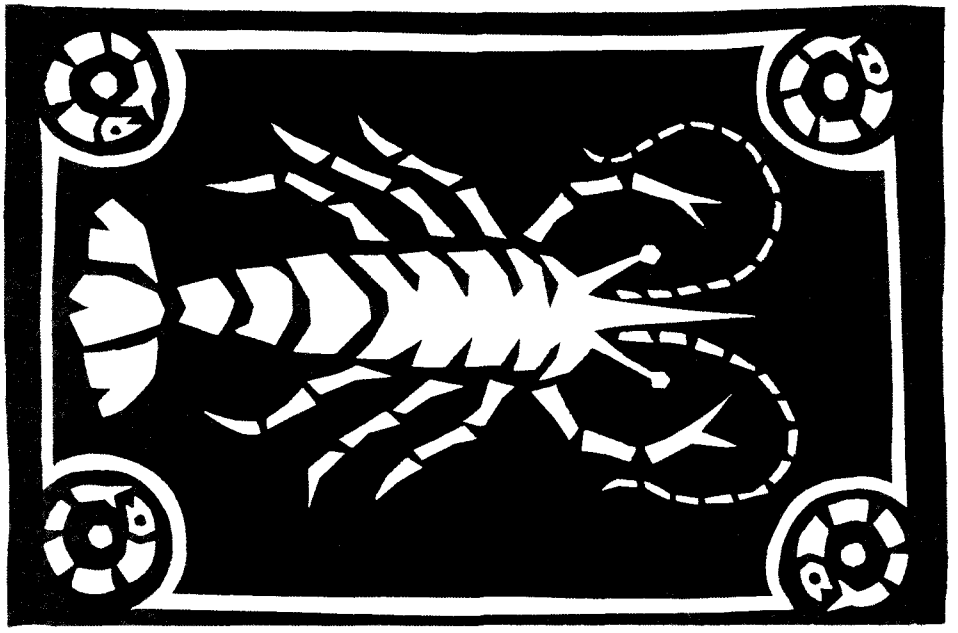

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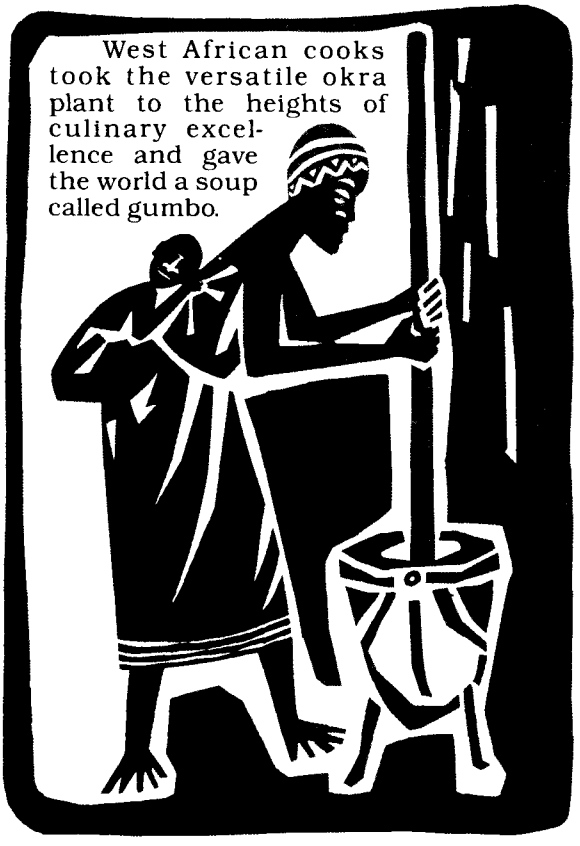

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Commentary

VOLUME 75 NUMBER FOUR *APRIL 1983*

Articles	17	How Important Is the PLO? *Daniel Pipes*
	26	The "Neutralism" of E.P. Thompson *Scott McConnell*
	33	Living without Health *Kevin G. Barnhurst*
	41	Milosz: Poetry and Politics *Robert Alter*
Story	48	Still Life with Scar *Jacob Lampart*
Music	55	Greatness & Decline of Richard Wagner *Samuel Lipman*
Fiction	60	Anti-Americanism & Other Clichés *Joseph Epstein*
Letters	2	from *Harold Mager, Gitta Bauer, George K. Romoser, A. von Graevenitz, Florian Bail, David Gress, Seymour Siegel, Howard L. Ross, Richard I. Wallsh, Herbert Loebel, Henryk Grynberg, Stephen J. Sniegoski, James Nuechterlein, Abraham Brumberg, Ernest Erber, Midge Decter,* and others
Books in Review	64	The Destruction of a Continent, by Karl Borgin and Kathleen Corbett; Development without Aid, by Melvyn B. Krauss *John O'Sullivan*
	68	Jews and Money: The Myths and the Reality, by Gerald Krefetz *Lucy S. Dawidowicz*
	72	The Muslim Discovery of Europe, by Bernard Lewis *J.B. Kelly*
	74	Slavery and Social Death, by Orlando Patterson *Robert Nisbet*
	76	The Arab-Israeli Wars, by Chaim Herzog *Eliot A. Cohen*
	78	The State Against Blacks, by Walter E. Williams *Michael Novak*

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Letters from Readers

German Neutralism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Gress's "What the West Should Know About German Neutralism" [January] is a learned academic exercise of small or minor relevance to the issue of neutralism in Germany today. The main reason for growing German neutralism is not even mentioned: the reluctance of both Germanys (East and West) to become the battleground for two superpowers. The conventional and nuclear arsenals of both superpowers would find their first, and perhaps final, annihilating jousting grounds there. Of this, nary a word in Mr. Gress's article.

HAROLD MAGER

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

To compare Thomas Mann with "some of the adherents of nationalist neutralism in recent decades," as David Gress does, *not only* seems, it indeed *is*, offensive. Moreover, this comparison is not borne out by Mann's thoughts or actions....

But first a few corrections of the "facts" on which David Gress based his asumptions.

Item: Thomas Mann did not, repeat *not*, sign the Appeal of 93 German professors, poets, and artists in October 1914.

Item: He returned to Europe (Switzerland) not in 1948 but in 1952, three years before his death.

Item: Thomas Mann was not "disgusted with American materialism." He never underestimated creature comforts and the amenities of being wealthy. He did long, especially in his last years, for the ambience of a German language culture, "where I understood and was understood." But even that would not have sufficed to change his plan to live out his life in the United States where he had gained citizenship in 1944, had not McCarthyism ("mindless" anti-Communism) reminded him painfully and embarrassingly of the beginnings of Nazism in Germany.

Item: Mr. Gress says that in 1955 Mann delivered two speeches on Schiller, "given demonstratively at Frankfurt in the West and Weimar in the East." But his visit to Weimar was already the second and thus hardly a demonstration anymore. In 1949 he went to Weimar where he delivered the same speech on Goethe's 200th birthday that he had given in Frankfurt. Moreover, in 1955 he spoke on Schiller's 150th birthday in Stuttgart not in Frankfurt....

To be sure, in the long and involved public life of Thomas Mann, in his work, and even in his simplest utterances one can find enough quotes to bolster almost any kind of ideology. From conservatism, monarchism, chauvinism, even anti-Semitism, to liberalism, cosmopolitanism, pacifism, even pro-Communism—one might find anything. Fortunately the gods have put sweat before success: you have to read Thomas Mann's works, his novels, his essays, his letters, his diaries to claim him as one of your own. I have grave doubts that even Mr. Gress's "more intellectual supporters of neutralism" have undergone this task. The "less intellectual" certainly have not, because they do not read at all. But even if they did, I doubt that they would find much joy....

When Thomas Mann first went to East Germany (in July 1949, still the Soviet occupation zone), he expected the political invectives that were showered on him in West Germany. They came from the same people who had resented his emigration in 1933 and his uncompromising stand toward Nazism in the first place. Yes, he could not help being impressed by the attention the Communists in the Eastern Zone showed him. Taken to Weimar, to the national theater, he and his wife passed—totally by chance of course—through Thomas Mann Street and heard—equally by sheer chance—the choir of the Thomas Mann School. (The organizers bragged to this writer about their cleverness.) But he knew also that by coming to the Germans who had not voluntarily chosen the Soviets as their occupiers he showed them a modicum of freedom, the freedom of speech.

For seventy of the eighty years Thomas Mann lived, he had known only one Germany, "indivisible under God." Why should his visit not be devoted to "Germany as a whole and not to zones of occupation"? His "real home country was after all the free German language untouched by occupation forces."

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Before anyone says, "you see," here is what he added in his Weimar speech: "Despite all differences between East and West, certain hard-fought-for and inalienable achievements of mankind, like freedom, justice, and dignity, should not be lost but should be held dearly and sacredly for the future. . . ." And note his letter to East German dictator Walter Ulbricht asking for justice for the political prisoners in notorious Waldheim in Saxony—and his "dedication to the Western world" in 1952—and, and, and.

In all of this I find very little consolation for those who want to claim Thomas Mann as an ancestor of leftist nationalism. *"Man goenne mir mein Weltdeutschtum,"* he said in a New Year's broadcast in 1945 on the BBC. "Let me have my German cosmopolitanism" would be a highly inadequate translation. I do not think he asked too much.

GITTA BAUER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"What the West Should Know About German Neutralism" by David Gress is tendentious and based on insufficient information about West Germany. . . . Mr. Gress seems to have little interest in concrete facts about political attitudes in West Germany; most of the article is devoted to a marginally persuasive version of German intellectual history. Where is the evidence from studies of political values in today's Germany, and where is the evidence from a study of the basic moderation of the political system?

Mr. Gress seeks to associate "bad" history with current political trends by using vague phrases such as "ideas returning to prominence and influence" or "obtaining intellectual respectability" (whatever that means). As one who has done research on German intellectual history, and on the "conservative revolution" of the 20's in particular, I am aware of what the author terms "national-neutralist nonsense" and of the fact that some of this exists in West Germany, not to speak of other countries. But it is entirely inaccurate and unfair . . . to argue in a determinist way from Germany's "fundamental position" (again, whatever that is) that today's politicians reflect a notion of *"der deutsche Sonderweg"* ["the German way," the idea, popular in the 20's, of a specific German social and economic order superior to Western capitalism]. More precisely: it is very shabby research and writing.

GEORGE K. ROMOSER
Visiting Professor
University of Mannheim
Mannheim, West Germany

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article by David Gress is timely. As has been the pattern in the past, German nationalism follows other nationalisms in a belated fashion. The immediate reasons for its emergence today are the failure of Western European political unification—which was supposed to preempt Germany's seeking a different way for its aspirations—and the recognition of East Germany on an international scale in the wake of détente. . . .

The question remains as to what the West, and the United States in particular, should do about this development, which will not abate. It is important to recognize that although Russia does not mention the reunification of Germany now, it may push for it if it realizes that a Germany estranged from the West would be to its advantage. Such a Germany would be neutral but grateful to Russia for helping it to attain reunification. In the pursuit of this goal, Russia may well agree to all-German elections which would, in any case, lead either to a Socialist victory or to an unstable leftist coalition with the pro-Western parties in a minority. Stalin made an offer of this kind in 1953.

In the 1950's, the United States came up with proposals for German unity which were based on free elections and a pro-Western Germany. . . . The United States should rethink the issue and come up with new plans. If Germans feel that the West is not interested in their aspirations, they will, if present conditions persist, look for "other ways"—and there is always a partner in the East with whom a deal can be struck.

A. VON GRAEVENITZ
University of Zurich
Zurich, Switzerland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In recent years one has read many articles on U.S.-German differences, most of them partisan and not terribly imaginative, but the concise essay on German neutralism by David Gress stands out from the rest. He argues that there has been . . . a rebirth of a deeply rooted anti-Western nationalism in West Germany which might persist even under a CDU-led government. This is an intriguing and alarming thesis: attitudinal surveys conducted in West Germany would seem to confirm it to some degree. But even if it were theoretically permissible to homogenize Right and Left in a new anti-Western mood, one must not derive it too quickly from the ideological rubble of political romanticism or from apparent instabilities in the German character. It would be a misunderstanding of the nature and appeal of the new nationalism if one looked only at its familiar temperamental manifestations. Its true intellectual temptation lies not so much in fantastic images of neutrality or even of Prussian-Russian collusion but in a skeptical perception of U.S. political will.

. . . Today's nationalists expect that the U.S. would not risk its substance to guarantee the physical integrity of its political protégés. However, they also believe that in the long run U.S. international interests command it to test Soviet will on European soil (Europe being the price rather than the prize of contest). But they fear that the U.S. . . . will fail to impose the outcome it prefers. . . . They point out that U.S. military policies only . . . destabilize the regions the U.S. ought to protect. The psychological effect of all this is that U.S. prestige continues to lose authority and its political will loses persuasiveness.

The same nationalists sense with apprehension an almost haphazard transformation of Soviet power from revolutionary totalitarianism to conservative militarism and believe that its military threat is nervous and its political will irritable. . . . One can hardly say that the new nationalism has yet matured into an intelligent doctrine. However, when and if it does one should expect it to be independent both of the psychology of resentment and of party philosophy. . . .

FLORIAN BAIL
Tantallon, Nova Scotia

DAVID GRESS writes:

Harold Mager claims that "the main reason for growing German neutralism" is "the reluctance of both Germanys . . . to become the battleground for two superpowers."

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I thank Mr. Mager for providing me with such a clear expression of the basic argument of the new neutralism. Its premises, however, are wholly wrong. First of all, it assumes that the "two superpowers" are similar in their desire for hegemony, their respect for other countries or lack thereof, and their political aims and strategies. Second, it speaks casually of "the two Germanys," as though one can compare the democratic West where the formulation of public opinion and policy is free, and the totalitarian East, where the desires, wishes, and hopes of the people matter not a whit because the regime consists of Quislings introduced and maintained in power by a combination of force and ideological indoctrination.

On the first count, I should remind Mr. Mager that West Germany is a member of the North Atlantic Alliance which came into existence to preserve Western Europe from Soviet domination. In this purpose it has been so far largely successful, but only because its will to self-defense was backed by a military deterrent credible both to the Soviets and to the Western countries themselves. Germany will become a battlefield only if, for some reason, the Soviets should decide that they have more to gain by military conquest than by a policy of "peaceful coexistence." One way this might happen is if neutralist tendencies in West Germany continue to the point where they seriously impair either West Germany's own military preparedness or, as a consequence, the credibility of NATO as a whole. That is why I offered my excursion into the intellectual ancestry of opinions whose current popularity is more a function of wishful thinking and romantic illusions than of a serious commitment either to peace or to the true interest of all Germans, whether East or West.

I also thank Gitta Bauer for her illuminating comments and hasten to state that nothing was further from my mind than any wish to insult the memory or reputation of the man I consider the greatest writer of our century. If Thomas Mann did not in fact sign the Appeal of 1914, I stand corrected; I had my information from a statement by Hans Mayer, whose attitude to Mann was ambiguous, to say the least. And Mann's return to Europe was decided upon in 1948, as can be gathered from remarks in *Die Entstehung des Dr. Faustus* ("The Origin of Dr. Faustus"). I consider that the key year for his final change in attitude to America.

As for Mann's visits to the East, the later one was the more important because in 1949 he was only visiting the Soviet occupation zone and so did not inadvertently give prestige to a regime of native Quislings, as he did in 1955 when he was the honored, and exploited, guest of the East German government. While sympathizing deeply with his feelings and desires, I must maintain—and Miss Bauer's own report bears me out—that lending his moral and intellectual authority, however inadvertently, to a regime that was the equivalent of the one that had forced him out in 1933 was extremely unfortunate,

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allowing himself to be exploited in its corruption of what was left of German culture.

George K. Romoser's outburst provides me with another example of what is wrong with political discussion in West Germany. I was not arguing that any influential politicians today assert a "*deutscher Sonderweg*," nor was I asserting that the ideas whose history I sketched were (as yet) common fare. But neither, on the other hand, do I think the victory of the Kohl government in the recent elections refutes my thesis. Indeed, if Mr. Romoser is familiar with recent studies of political values in West Germany, he ought to reconsider his somewhat nervous assertion of the "basic moderation" of the system; so should those many other official or semi-official spokesmen who seemingly never tire of assuring anxious friends and allies that all is well, that the peace movement is marginal and insignificant, and that national-neutralist illusions are found only on the lunatic fringe. Is it insignificant, for example, that according to the very detailed opinion survey carried out by the Federal Chancellery in Bonn (almost 7,000 two-hour interviews), minorities of 30-40 percent and sometimes more have no fear of Soviet intentions, believe that American policies endanger peace, believe that West Germany's interests differ from those of the United States, think national unification possible if West Germany would adopt a more neutral foreign policy, feel alienated from the political process, and as a result fear the future and indeed have little faith in the reality or relevance of the democratic process? Furthermore, this distrust of the West and these national longings are predominant among the young and highly educated.

Apart from horror at the thought of what the "education" of these people must have consisted of, I think the appropriate reaction from the perspective of Western security and, yes, peace, is worry—because these are precisely the people who are going to be running the country, in government, media, and business, within the next ten to fifteen years. There is a good German word for what Mr. Romoser is trying to do: *Verharmlosung*, trivialization of danger when one knows better. At a moment when elements in the official German world seem to be moving from a position of claiming that the ideas I have mentioned are unimportant to one of concern, even respect for them (see Foreign Minister Genscher's talk of a "patriotism of peace"), such denials are far from helpful.

A. von Graevenitz argues that the Soviet Union might offer German unification in exchange for neutrality. That is, indeed, what some new neutralists like to think, but I disagree. Stalin's offer existed mainly in the minds of national neutralists then and since, as recent scholarship has shown. The Russians have certainly played the "unification card" whenever it has served their interests, but those interests most emphatically do not include a unified Germany, Socialist or otherwise. There are reports that in 1981 they tried to threaten Solidarity in Poland with rumors that they were going to give back Silesia, Pomerania, etc. to Germany and perhaps even allow unification. Similarly, there is no doubt that the combination of the new "soft" nationalism and neutralism is very gratifying to them —but only as a tool. All the more reason for the West, especially the U.S., to heed Mr. von Graevenitz's advice and address the problem before it is too late.

I can only agree with Florian Bail's summary of the moderate neutralist position, based on fear that misconceived U.S. strategies without the means to carry them out, combined with ill-informed and weak political leadership, can lead to war, and on the assumption that the Soviet Union is a status-quo and not an expansionist power. The latter assumption is also characteristic, of course, of the dominant school of American Kremlinologists. Given these beliefs, the idea, as expressed by official West German spokesmen, that the chief source of danger is Western rhetoric that might scare the Russians, or Western actions that might destabilize the Soviet empire, is reasonable. However, to come full circle to the national issue, the contradiction between this exaggerated concern for the stability of the Soviet empire and the national interests of Germans West or East is, to me at least, glaring, and rings particularly false when coming from West German Social Democrats who absolutely reject American arguments about the need sometimes to assist right-wing regimes to prevent chaos and violence.

The Holocaust

To the Editor of Commentary:

Henryk Grynberg ["Appropriating the Holocaust," November 1982] charges the United States *Holocaust Memorial Council* with "universalizing" the Holocaust. If by that he means that our Council does not recognize that the destruction of European Jewry is a unique event in history, then he does not correctly state our point of view. Of course we recognize that the *Shoah* [Holocaust] is different in kind and quantity from all the other bloody tragedies which have unfortunately punctuated human history.

The report of the Commission (the legal predecessor of the current Council), which our distinguished chairman, Elie Wiesel, submitted to the President, specifically stated: "The universality of the Holocaust lies in its uniqueness: the event is essentially Jewish, its interpretation is universal."

This statement informs the philosophy of the work of the Council. The projected Holocaust Museum will be concerned with the Jewish tragedy. It is unique in the annals of human history. However, as with all gravely momentous events, the particular illuminates the universal aspects of human existence. It is through contemplation of the Jewish Holocaust that some insights are gained about the inhumanity of man to man. This does not mean, as Mr. Grynberg insists, that the Holocaust is thereby turned into "a generalized metaphor for the suffering of all mankind." Its uniqueness does not mean that it has *no* relation to the experiences of others. Though other tragedies are not identical with the Jewish horror, there are similarities. By claiming such uniqueness—that there is no relation to others—we, in a peculiar way, reincarnate the myth of the non-human Jew; by comparing the Holocaust, say, to a black ghetto, we trivialize the Nazi murders. But by saying that this event bears no relation to genocidal tragedies, we sever any relation to the experiences of others. The world has always made these two errors about the Jews: they are either so devilish that they cannot share the earth with other human beings or they are so special they do not really fit into the real world of time and space. The great museum near the Mall in Washington, D.C., which we are mandated to construct by an act of

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Congress, will deal with the Jewish *churban* [catastrophe]. It will also point to the ways we can understand other tragedies, such as for example the massacre of Armenians in World War I, as a manifestation of the demonic which possesses some people and sends them on a devilish mission to destroy another people totally.

We do not believe that in doing this we are "robbing" the Jewish martyrs of their deaths. We stand in awe and shattering pain in the remembrance of what happened. We hope to transform our memories and our intentions to prevent repetitions. There are few better ways to honor the dead.

[Rabbi] SEYMOUR SIEGEL
Executive Director
United States Holocaust
Memorial Council
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It is true that the Holocaust was a deliberate attempt to wipe out European Jewry. . . . It is also true, as Heinz Kremers, the German theologian, wrote: "The Holocaust signifies the crisis of our civilization, our culture, our policy, and our religion. Six million people have been murdered by the heirs of Christendom for no other reason than the fact that they were Jews." And it is of course true that we must not trivialize the Holocaust today; we must, for example, cease referring to a highway accident causing the death of six or twelve or one hundred people as a "holocaust of the highways."

But we cannot fail to remember that there *were* Christians who helped Jews; we cannot allow the work and plight of men like Raoul Wallenberg to be forgotten. Nor can we tell Christian families who lost relatives in "concentration camps" that their losses were insignificant. The fact is that there were over eleven million people killed in those camps, albeit six million Jews perished in camps which were set up as the "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem.

We must remember that in Yugoslavia the Nazis created the puppet state of Croatia. There, the Jasenavoc "camp" was established in which some 750,000 Serbians, 26,000 Gypsies, and 60,000 Jews—men, women, and children—perished. We Jews cannot minimize this fact to the Serbian community; we cannot say that this was not the same genocidal crime of the Nazis, even though we know that the Serbs, who were and are Christians, were not faced with a Final Solution.

We Jews cannot allow the facts of the Holocaust to fade from memory; we must constantly lead the world in its remembrance of where unfounded hatred can lead. But can we afford to shut out the losses of other groups who suffered from the atrocities of the Nazis? Can we afford to forget that one of the most disastrous effects of World War I was the disintegration of the liberal and tolerant spirit which civilized nations of the 20th century were supposed to have acquired? Can we allow the world to forget that it was exaggerated nationalism, fascism, and Communism, as well as religious and political fanaticism, that paved the way for Hitler, the Nazis, and World War II? Can we allow the world to forget that society was reduced to the lowest level of moral decay, characterized by an incredible intolerance which was thought to have vanished with the Middle Ages? . . .

We, as Jews, know better than anyone else what effects intolerance can have. We know the effects of the singling out of one group. Can we, then, afford to single ourselves out as the only group who suffered during the Nazi regime? I propose that it would be foolish to do so. I propose that we Jews must continually point out to the world the facts that led up to the Holocaust and to World War II. That we must lead other groups in scrutinizing intolerance and suspicious-sounding racial theories. . . . We must do all this with the help of Christendom; as a partner of Christendom, not by singling ourselves out and standing against Christendom.

HOWARD L. ROSS
Director, Midwest Region
League for Human Rights
B'nai B'rith Canada
Winnipeg, Manitoba

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . By "appropriating" the Holocaust for the Jewish people alone, or a portion thereof, Henryk Grynberg makes the Holocaust essentially

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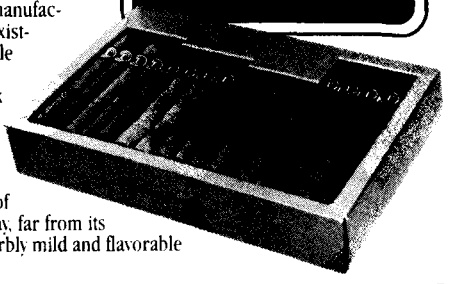

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a Jewish problem, a Jewish event. No doubt Jews were the victims, but this is not the sole lesson to be learned from the event. The death camps present no moral questions for today's Jew. The questions—the moral imperatives—belong to those who perpetrated the Final Solution: and it is they who must remember and learn from their moral lapse. . . .

The Holocaust must be universal as well as particular. Mr. Grynberg is correct in demanding that the Jewish "role" in the Holocaust be prominently recalled; he is wrong in appropriating the history itself.

RICHARD I. WALLSH
Longwood, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The extermination camps undoubtedly killed Jews to the exclusion of almost everyone else, but the implication that the Nazis would have stopped with the Jews, had they won the war in Europe, is wrong. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt documents that the Nazis intended to proceed with the same monstrous efficiency against other groups. The Poles, the Ukrainians, perhaps even the entire Slavic population of Russia, were to suffer the fate of the Jews. As early as 1941, the Nazi leadership was contemplating steps against the Poles, whose echo of the measures leading up to the Final Solution is not coincidental: death sentences for sexual intercourse between Poles and Germans, all Poles required to wear a "P" sign. Indeed, once safe in their European fortress, the Nazis intended to turn *on the Germans*, with a program of extermination of all Germans with a family history of "poor" health. All of these measures would have been carried out in the name of the same racial ideal that animated the slaughter of the Jews.

As it transpired, the Holocaust was the special fate of the Jews. Even if the Nazis had been able to carry out their plans against the Poles and others, the Jews would still have the distinction of being their first victims. Mr. Grynberg is right to criticize the attempt to portray the nations of Europe as the victims of Auschwitz. He is wrong to restrict the significance of Nazi methods to hatred of Jews *per se*. . . .

MICHAEL KING
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a survivor of Auschwitz, I find it at times unbearable to listen to the many distortions, falsifications, and lies which pass as truth today about that extermination camp in particular, and the Holocaust in general.

I would like to express my gratitude to Henryk Grynberg and COMMENTARY for the excellent article, "Appropriating the Holocaust," and for laying the blame for the killing of six million Jews where, it seems to me, it really belongs—on the Christian teachings of hate and contempt toward the Jews. . . .

However, what Mr. Grynberg calls the "universalization, trivialization, and blurring of the outline" of the Holocaust, is, I feel, not only a psychological response by Christians and Jews but in part a consequence of Soviet revisionism. Our media and teaching institutions naively propagate these distortions and falsifications, and some liberal and Left writers support them.

Lillian Hellman changed Anne Frank's diary to "universalize" it. William Styron, in his novel *Sophie's Choice*, is less subtle. He steals the Holocaust from the Jews and gives it to the Poles: according to Styron, "myriads and multitudes" of Slavs were gassed! The New York *Times* referred to Auschwitz as a place where millions of Poles, Jews, and Gypsies were killed. As Mr. Grynberg observes, our centers for Holocaust studies, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the President's Commission on the Holocaust routinely include five million non-Jewish victims, thus depriving the Holocaust of its Jewish particularity.

Who and how many did die in Auschwitz?

According to historians Raul Hilberg and Lucy S. Dawidowicz, two-and-a-half to three million Jews.

According to Jerzy Brandhuber's *Soviet Prisoners of War in Auschwitz*, 13,683 Russian POW's.

According to the official Auschwitz guidebook, published in Poland in 1978, 18,946 Gypsies.

According to the Commission for German War Crimes in Poland, 56,000 Catholic Poles.

Thus, a total of 88,500 Russians, Gypsies, and Poles died in Auschwitz, or less than 3 percent of the number of Jewish victims.

The vicious and incredible fact that the extermination by gas was reserved for Jews only has never been clearly acknowledged. Two minor exceptions to this rule have been cited . . . to blur this abomination against the Jews—resulting in the belief that non-Jews were also gassed by the millions.

The only non-Jews ever to be gassed in Auschwitz were 600 Russian POW's and 250 prisoners from the camp hospital in 1941 (official Auschwitz guidebook). In 1944 4,000 Gypsies were gassed (Hoess testimony). But one has to take into account that Himmler's "anthropologists" had convinced him that Gypsies were of Jewish origin: therefore, they actually died as Jews. . . .

During my own imprisonment in Auschwitz I envied the Catholic-Polish inmates because I knew, and they knew, that they were safe from being gassed. None of them willingly transferred to other camps. The opposite was true for Jews. We tried in any and every way to get away from Auschwitz and its flaming chimneys.

The media talk about millions of non-Jewish Holocaust victims is based on ignorance. For centers devoted to the study of the Holocaust to speak of five million non-Jewish victims is ludicrous and supports the propagation of evil. The Holocaust belongs to the Jews. . . .

HERBERT LOEBEL
Sherman, Connecticut

HENRYK GRYNBERG writes:

For Rabbi Siegel, since the suffering of Jews does have a "relation to the experiences of others," it is important that "we . . . understand other tragedies." He sees such expressions of understanding as a means of avoiding a danger, namely, a reincarnation of "the myth of the non-human Jew."

As it happens, one can easily find in Jewish history examples of tragedies that are exactly or nearly "similar" to those that have befallen others. The slaughter of Ukrainian Jews by Cossacks and peasants in the middle of the 17th century, for instance, bears a similarity to the genocide of the Armenians by the Turks during World War I. (There is no question in my mind that those Armenian victims deserve their own, separate memorial.) But the Holocaust, by Rabbi Siegel's and the Council's own definition, is unique and it ought to be treated as such. In the Holocaust Jews died, precisely, as *non-humans*. Others may feel a need to blur the awful uniqueness of that fact by erecting a common monument, but why should Jews?

It is not for Jews to prove that they can understand "other tragedies"—why should they, being human, fail to understand them?—

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but for others to show how much *they* understand the unique *Jewish* tragedy. I cannot allow my murdered family, my annihilated town, my exterminated people to become a counter in some strategy of political accommodation.

To answer Howard L. Ross would mean repeating my entire article, for he does not seem to understand any of my arguments or explanations and reiterates all those mistakes and banalities I tried to do away with. His highly rhetorical letter also contains several serious distortions. Nowhere in my article did I make a statement that Jews were "the only group who suffered during the Nazi regime." I clearly explained the differences among "suffering," war crimes, and even genocide in comparison with the unique event of the Holocaust. The Serbians were victims of a genocidal war crime—as Jews had been quite often *before* the Holocaust—but it was not "the same genocidal crime of the Nazis." I also never intended to "shut out the losses of other groups," and nowhere did I indicate that the losses of others "were insignificant." I said rather that they were *different,* and in fact almost identical with many Jewish losses suffered before the Holocaust.

Mr. Ross obviously suffers from a Jewish fear of being singled out, emphasizing as he does that we (Jews) cannot "afford to single ourselves out as the only group . . ." and so on. But we *have been* singled out, and nobody can change that fact, either by rhetoric or manipulation.

I quite agree with Richard I. Wallsh that the Holocaust is a moral question for the perpetrators, but they are definitely not the only ones who must "learn from their moral lapse," because that was a lapse of a whole civilization. Who these perpetrators are is another good question: they are not only those who committed the Final Solution—I would also include, among others, the active haters of Jews in the 1930's from all over the world. I am not "appropriating the history itself" when I protest against the universalization which names the Holocaust a "crime against humanity" instead of a "crime against the Jews." It is also not I who make the Holocaust a Jewish event, because a Jewish event it obviously is, nor do I make it a Jewish problem, because it shall forever remain a problem for every Jew facing this world.

Michael King sees in my article "the implication that the Nazis would have stopped with the Jews, had they won the war. . . ." I don't see any such implication and I certainly did not put it there. Moreover, I did not write a single word about the future, but only about the past and present, because that is where the facts are. Mr. King looks into the future for arguments (and even into an imaginary future), because he cannot find them among the actual facts. Perhaps Hannah Arendt tried to guess the Nazis' intentions toward other groups, but more recent historians still do not see any evidence to support such guesses. There are not even any documents revealing the Nazis' intentions toward the Jews (they were very careful about this).

I agree with Herbert Loebel that Soviet-bloc propaganda has contributed largely to the universalization and trivialization of the Holocaust, but its success has a psychological base in both the Communist and non-Communist world. I would call it "naive" on Mr. Loebel's part to state that "our media and our teaching institutions *naively* propagate these distortions . . ." (emphasis added). In my opinion, they know what they are doing and why. The most innocent of the many reasons is perhaps the desire of a new generation in our media to free itself from its parents' guilt complex and to regain its grandparents' freedom to be nasty to the Jews. As far as the figures are concerned: one should remember that the Germans used to select the Jews from among the Soviet POW's (together with commissars and all Bolsheviks), so it is possible that many of the Soviet soldiers who were gassed in Auschwitz were also Jews and were gassed because they were Jews.

Politics & Ideology

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . James Nuechterlein ["The Republican Future," January] is, pa-

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tently, an able writer, and many of his insights are extremely illuminating, but I remain convinced that the books he discusses in his article, *Back to Basics* and *Post-Conservative America*, are largely irrelevant to an understanding of American politics.

In my view, the next national election will be won by the candidate who can convince the American electorate that he can (1) tame the federal bureaucracy; (2) put together a foreign policy that accords with current reality; (3) develop programs that will enable the United States to adjust efficiently to a changing economy; and (4) restore America's basic institutions. Put another way, no one is in favor of pollution, of crime, of poor education, of constantly rising health costs, of widespread unemployment, or of a foreign policy that changes with every climatic variation.

In short, the American voter is neither a conservative nor a liberal; he is a pragmatist—witness the Nixon and Reagan landslides and Carter's 1976 victory. These triumphs were not accidental. The candidates won because they said what the voters wanted to hear . . . and still want to hear.

RAYMOND GARMEL
Indianapolis, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

So as not to convey a distorted picture of the article, I must begin by saying that James Nuechterlein's "The Republican Future" is on the whole an insightful and favorable account of the rising American Right. One small part of his article, however, has caused me considerable consternation. This is his charge that responsible conservatives like Burton Yale Pines . . . have failed to dissociate themselves from certain unpalatable New Right extremists (Mr. Nuechterlein does not indict the whole New Right) whom Mr. Nuechterlein does not name. Such a failure, Mr. Nuechterlein believes, might discredit the whole conservative movement. He finds the situation analogous to the "popular-front mentality" of liberals of the 1930's who failed to dissociate themselves from Stalinism.

This analogy, which implies that the innate evil and danger of certain New Rightists is equivalent to Stalinism, is the height of hyperbole. By this analogy, Mr. Neuchterlein would seem to give credence to the Norman Lear image of the New Right bogeyman. . . . Furthermore, not only are New Rightists not comparable to Stalinists, it is highly questionable whether any leading New Right figures are, in any way, so unpalatable as to require repudiation by responsible conservatives.

Mr. Nuechterlein is alarmed not so much by the substance of the New Right's issues as by the political "style" of some of its members, whom he labels "crazies, zealots, and fanatics." But he does not make it clear how leading New Right figures diverge from traditional American political practices. (Since Mr. Nuechterlein leaves these unpalatable New Rightists unnamed, it is possible that some may exist of whom I am not aware; but if Mr. Nuechterlein intended to refer to people other than the New Right's more prominent figures, he should have identified them.)

No New Right figure that I am aware of, for instance, has called for the violent overthrow of our constitutional government or for massive civil disobedience (in contrast to positions take by many individuals of the Old and New Left). . . . New Rightists combine politics with religion, but for years this has been the quintessential position of liberal churchmen.

Perhaps Mr. Nuechterlein finds certain New Rightists guilty of using exaggerated rhetoric. Again, it is difficult to see how New Right political rhetoric exceeds the usual rough-and-tumble of American politics. Comparisons should be made with the rhetoric of Harold Ickes, or even FDR, toward New Deal critics and isolationists; of liberal politicians and commentators toward Barry Goldwater in 1964; and of civil-rights and feminist leaders toward the Reagan administration today. In short, these "responsible," mainstream liberals have branded their enemies as fascists, racists, warmongers, war profiteers, insane proponents of nuclear holocaust—and have been quite successful politically. Is it reasonable to require the New Right to abide by higher standards?

I do not intend to imply that the American conservative movement should be all-inclusive, or that the New Right is inerrant. Conservatives already correctly separate themselves from extremists of the far Right—neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan. Some of the tactics of certain New Rightists may be politically counterproductive, as Mr. Nuechterlein points out. Perhaps they are even focusing on some wrong issues. But that they may be wrong in some instances should not mean that they should be anathematized by responsible conservatives, much less that any nefarious comparisons to Stalinism should be made.

STEPHEN J. SNIEGOSKI
Mt. Rainier, Maryland

JAMES NUECHTERLEIN writes:

Since both of my correspondents combine their gentle rebukes with cordial comments, I trust that my response, even where it takes issue with their criticism, will display an appropriately irenic spirit.

Raymond Garmel suggests that I take ideology too seriously. The American electorate is entirely pragmatic, he says, and will respond favorably to candidates who show promise of taming the federal bureaucracy, creating a realistic foreign policy, developing efficient economic programs, and restoring "America's basic institutions" (I leave the quotation marks in place because I'm not sure what Mr. Garmel has in mind by this phrase). No one, he goes on, is in favor of pollution, crime, unemployment, etc., and voters simply want those problems dealt with without regard to ideological categories.

It is true that most people are more interested in getting problems solved than in maintaining ideological consistency, but Mr. Garmel overlooks two central points.

In the first place, public opinion is led by "opinion leaders" in America's various subcultures, and all the studies I am familiar with indicate that opinion leaders are more ideologically concerned and consistent than the average citizen. The people to whom ordinary voters look for an interpretation of politics and politicians tend to think in ways that make "problem-solving" an ideological exercise, at least in part.

The second and related point emerges from Mr. Garmel's suggestion that voters support politicians who can "put together a foreign policy [and presumably a domestic policy as well] that accords with current reality." But we do not all see "reality" in the same terms, and our various and conflicting realities are inextricably bound up with our ideological preferences. Virtually all politicians think of themselves and their programs as realistic, and we voters, according largely to our

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implicit or explicit ideological inclinations, choose the "reality" we find most compatible. (I mean no mindless relativism here; some realities are more real than others. But that is another issue.)

We vary, of course, in our degree of ideological purity, but I know of virtually no one who takes a serious and sustained interest in politics who is not, to *some* degree, ideologically inclined. We do not approach the various discrete problems of public policy in isolated terms. Our definitions as to what the problems are and how they ought to be solved tend to form roughly consistent patterns over the range of issues, and those patterns can be thought of as ideologies. Those people described as "pragmatists" are less often people devoid of ideology than they are people of centrist ideological inclinations. I therefore cannot agree with Mr. Garmel's suggestion that the general ideological climate is irrelevant to political prospects.

Stephen J. Sniegoski thinks I am too hard on the New Right and too concerned that the conservative movement maintain its distance from New Right extremists.

Let me concede at once that Mr. Sniegoski is right to take me to task for the analogy with Stalinism. In writing that, I said more than I meant and more than was proper. The right-wing equivalent of the Stalinists would be, as Mr. Sniegoski suggests, the neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, and it is unfair to place the New Right, even by implication, in such company.

On the larger point, however, I would hold my ground. A better analogy—and one which I made elsewhere in the article—would compare the relationship between conservatives (and Republicans) and the New Right with that between liberals (and Democrats) and the New Left. I still believe, as I argued in the article, that "conservatives who rightly attack liberals for allowing themselves to be compromised by the New Left should make as clear as possible those things that distinguish them, in style and substance, from the New Right," and that the New Right could potentially "do the GOP as much damage as the New Left earlier did the Democrats." Here is a case, in other words, where prudence and principle come together. Conservatism will be diminished if it becomes identified with the "fanaticism, intolerance, and mean-spiritedness" that a great many people—by no means all of them on the far (or even near) Left—associate with the New Right.

One must differentiate between the broad range of Americans rightly concerned with social and moral issues—radical feminist and gay-rights movements, abortion-on-demand, the imposition of racial and sexual quotas, the delegitimizing of any public expression of religious values, attacks on the nuclear family and on traditional standards of sexual morality—and the institutional leadership of the New Right, whose often crudely negative political attacks manage to do conservative causes at least as much harm as good. We should ask ourselves how it was that a left-wing politician like Senator Paul Sarbanes, who richly deserved to lose on his record, managed to attract such a huge sympathy vote by virtue of his being targeted for defeat by New Right leaders.

I am entirely unimpressed, in this context, with Mr. Sniegoski's argument that the irresponsible behavior of certain liberals in branding conservatives as fascists, racists, and warmongers, thereby justifies parallel behavior on the Right. Irresponsible is irresponsible, and *tu quoque* has never been a persuasive form of argument or justification.

I understand that politics is coalition and that excessive fastidiousness can breed self-righteousness along with ineffectuality. It is not the primary duty of conservatives and neoconservatives to take on the New Right, but it is their duty—and in their own interest—to create and maintain a political alternative to the Left that cannot plausibly be dismissed, as much of the New

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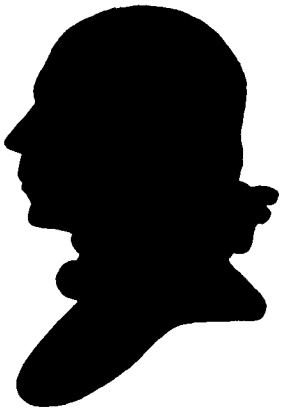

J. MADISON

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Right's program and personnel can be, as narrow-minded and simplistic. This is particularly true for those who deal in the intellectual side of politics.

If politics suggests coalitions, ideas have to do with distinctions. And as already noted, when distinctions are not maintained, causes can be hurt. I believe deeply, for example, in the pro-life cause and am convinced that some form of legislative action to restrain abortion is necessary. But I am also convinced that to the extent the pro-life position becomes identified primarily with Senator Jesse Helms and the political forces he represents, it will be the less likely to succeed. The point is not that mainstream conservatives should attempt to exclude the New Right from the common struggle against abortion-on-demand, but that they should do everything in their power to demonstrate that the pro-life cause is in no sense the peculiar property of New Right militants.

As with issues, so with candidacies. In 1972, George McGovern could have been a formidable candidate as head of a broad liberal coalition that included, at its outer edges, elements of the New Left. But when he became commonly perceived as the New Left's agent, he invited his own political ruin. Ronald Reagan should—and I have no doubt will—profit from that example.

On Irving Howe, Cont.

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is astonishing that Midge Decter ["Socialism & Its Irresponsibilities: The Case of Irving Howe," December 1982] would write . . . an article that so flagrantly departs from the truth. Hardly any of her allegations about Irving Howe's *A Margin of Hope*—and *en passant* about some of his other writings—can withstand comparison with the relevant texts. Is she so contemptuous of her readers as to assume that none of them, for instance, has read *World of Our Fathers*, and is therefore unaware that her epithet "legendary" (nothing about religious Jewry, "no representatives of that strange and to Howe hostile breed known as Zionists," nothing but "gripping photographs by Jacob Riis and mannered Yiddishist memories") is arrant nonsense?

The same—and even more so—is true about her indictment of Howe's autobiography. She berates him for speaking disparagingly of his father: read his moving tributes on pp. 7-8 and 337-39 and judge for yourself. She asserts that Howe offers no "specifics" about "his position of militancy within the Socialist party"; that he neglects to disclose (and make sufficient amends for) his erstwhile views on World War II, particularly his attitude toward Hitler's war on Jews; that he "glosses over . . . the breaking of his ties with the Workers party" (that is, the Trotskyites); that his "account of the 1950's" is unqualifiedly one-sided; that he presided over a "lynching" of Hannah Arendt, in connection with her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* —a lynching for which his own "training" in the Trotskyite "department of public brutality" had fully prepared him. Howe's pages on "the cultural and political rowdiness of 60's radicalism," particularly with respect to the Vietnam war, are marred, she says, by "a selectivity that goes so far as to invite the word 'dishonesty' " and by (again, presumably, inadequate) "retrospective apology." Most outrageously, perhaps, she accuses him of a "posture" from which "no failure of policy ever need be confronted, no error need be confessed." All of which—as any reader of the book can readily ascertain—goes so far as to invite the words "lies—sheer, unadulterated lies."

What kind of a book would Miss Decter have Howe write? Well, for one thing, I suppose, she would have liked him to be a bit more forthcoming (rather than "elegantly discreet") about all that "fumbling around with the female comrades" that he and his fellow radicals in the 1930's engaged in. Above all, however, she'd want him to confess—fully, abjectly, one might almost say in typical Bolshevik fashion (and here retrospectiveness would be jolly welcome)—that "politics in the 20th century has a way of presenting people with stark choices and that the pretense [!] of commitment to a third alternative is itself always a choice—on the wrong side." Which is to say that in the 1930's Howe should have supported the Spanish monarchists; that in the late 1960's and 70's he should have sanctioned the American war in Vietnam. And that he should acknowledge that Commentary's position on McCarthyism was correct. (Irving Kristol, 1952: "For there is one thing the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist." Norman Podhoretz thirty years later: ". . . what McCarthyism did was mobilize support for an anti-Communist foreign policy by making the danger of Communism seem domestic and immediate"; about whether it was in fact, rather than seemingly, "domestic and immediate" the less said, the better.) In short, Miss Decter would want Howe to confess that he and his supporters are *au fond* enemies of freedom—as her rousing peroration has it. Nothing less would satisfy her lustily vengeful spirit.

I realize that in criticizing Miss Decter's article, I have not offered a chapter-and-verse refutation of all her willful distortions and mendacities—nor, for that matter, of her equally willful omissions. . . . I can only once more urge the reader to read the book. Like the non-Jewish aficionado of rye bread, he need not share Irving Howe's commitment to socialism. All that is required is a decent respect for truth, humanity—and literature.

Abraham Brumberg
Chevy Chase, Maryland

To the Editor of Commentary:

Midge Decter's article is aimed not only at Irving Howe's *A Margin of Hope*, but at the man. Though I found some of the questions she raises about the book to be valid, they are drowned out by the shrillness and shrewishness with which they are articulated.

It does not suffice for her to show that Howe's concepts are wrong, but that he is dishonest; that she has assessed his moral standards and found them wanting. Not only is the reader to be convinced that Howe's works are overrated, that he wrote little or nothing of value, but that he is furtive, evasive, and disloyal, both as an American and a Jew; a man to be viewed with contempt. In short, Miss Decter's aim is to destroy Howe's reputation as a writer, an intellectual, and a public personality. The space and the prominence given to her article are to facilitate its use as a weapon to carry out a predetermined assassination of his character.

The purpose and style of her review are familiar to me, though, fortunately, I have not encountered them since 1948, when I was hatcheted in 118 pages of a "book"

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titled *Under the Banner of Marxism*, written by Max Schachtman, mentor of Irving Howe and myself in the quasi-Trotskyite group to which we then belonged. The occasion of Schachtman's attack on me was my break with all forms of Leninist doctrine, as set forth in a 62-page statement of resignation from the group. Schachtman's purpose, as is Miss Decter's, was to destroy my reputation, standing, and intellectual authority, a form of literary terrorism designed to intimidate those who might wish to give open-minded consideration to my views. (The Soviet government under Stalin revived the term "enemy of the people" to serve a similar end.)

The technique of attacking the character of the author in order to destroy his work is at variance with the commonly accepted standard of intellectual discourse in liberal and democratic society where there is a mutual assumption of the honesty and benign purpose of an opponent's views, despite the sharpness of differences. The latter practice results from what Karl Kautsky, preeminent theoretician of the Socialist International in the early decades of this century, referred to as "the civilizing influence of democracy upon conduct" (I quote from memory) in replying to Leon Trotsky's defense of Bolshevism. (Trotsky considered Kautsky's observation one of the most amusing things he had ever heard. Miss Decter might agree with him.)

Character assassination occupies a prominent place in the literary arsenal of authoritarians of both Left and Right. It is part of the *moral abyss* which separates them from decent human beings, even when they might be in political agreement with the latter from time to time. *Example*: the political convergence of the Communist party of the United States and the "Old Guard" wing of the Socialist party (*Jewish Daily Forward*, needle-trades unions, etc.) in 1936 and after on the proposition that President Roosevelt and the New Deal should be supported, resulted in their coming together to create the American Labor party. What caused the split of this party and the founding of the Liberal party was less political differences than the *moral incompatibility* between Stalin's American supporters and the right-wing Socialists. *Example*: why was COMMENTARY critical of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the heyday of his power? The magazine hardly had reason to differ with his exposure of Communists in government or elsewhere. Was it not because COMMENTARY considered his methods, i.e., character assassination, to be morally incompatible with its standards of that period? After all, none of us objected when at an earlier date Walter Reuther, with an entourage of mainly democratic socialists, drove the Stalinists out of the leadership of the auto-workers union and then helped bring about the same result in a number of other unions. The Stalinists saw no difference between Walter Reuther and Senator Joseph McCarthy. (Nor, for that matter, between McCarthy and Senator Hubert Humphrey, who ran them out of the Democratic Farmer Labor party of Minnesota.) Since COMMENTARY does see a difference, how does the magazine define it? If you give this some thought, you will understand why Midge Decter's review of the Howe autobiography is a page out of the book of Joe McCarthy. (Or, to cite an example on the authoritarian Left, out of the book of Lillian Hellman.)

The importance of what is at stake here goes beyond the need to rise in defense of Irving Howe's character, whose honesty, decency, and dedication to democratic values, as he sees them, are, if anything, a notch above the average, especially given his career as public man and writer, its locus, and its time span. The ultimate importance of this issue, however, is the defense of the Western liberal tradition of decency in civil discourse. One need only read the history of journalism and literature in the final years of the Weimar republic to understand how fragile decency in public controversy can become when sizable segments of society no longer feel called upon to practice it. (The same thing happened in Russia in 1917.)

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views and values, as set forth by Howe in his book, gave Miss Decter ample material with which to take issue, to criticize, to refute, without attacking the integrity of the author. Howe's political stance with regard to World War II (which I shared) can be assessed without using it as evidence of moral leprosy. Or her allegations as to when Howe first showed concern with the Holocaust and how he reacted to it. Miss Decter is supposed to be reviewing a book, not conducting a star-chamber investigation or prosecuting a defendant at the bar. Her role models, therefore, need not be McCarthy or Vishinsky.

The view Howe (and others of us) held during World War II, viz., that it was essentially an "imperialist war," seen at the time as a replay of World War I, was, of course, disproven by events, and Howe's autobiography does not seek to argue with this judgment of history. He tries to explain what led him into such a totally erroneous interpretation. (Meanwhile, he and his comrades did serve in the American army, some never to return, others disabled for life.) But Howe's admission of political error does not suffice for Miss Decter. She sees it as evidence of moral deficiency. Howe erred, she contends, not simply by a faulty reading of events, but because he lacked a "love of country" and concern for the Jews of Europe. (The fact that Howe's political co-thinkers in Europe shared his view of World War II did not keep them from fighting in the anti-Nazi Resistance and dying in Hitler's death camps, where they were in double jeopardy as Trotskyites in camps frequently run by Stalinist Kapos or "trusties" who had the power of life or death over fellow prisoners. See David Rousset's *The Other Kingdom*.)

Did Abraham Lincoln, as a young Congressman, suffer from a lack of "love of country" in his opposition to the war with Mexico? Despite the popularity of this war, the voters did not judge him to be morally deficient in 1860 when they elected him President. Howe as editor of a tiny socialist weekly had less influence on World War II than did Representative Lincoln of Illinois in 1845. The American people might understand—even forgive and forget—but not Midge Decter.

Is this making too much of Miss Decter's article? Then let her say that despite an ocean of philosophical and political differences with Howe, she accepts him as a loyal American and a concerned Jew, and—until convicted with due process by a jury of his peers—a normally honest and decent man who seeks to serve the best interests of his fellow citizens, as he sees them, in an (as yet) democratic and liberal society. And also let COMMENTARY set a standard in making a distinction between a person's avowed values, conduct, and ideas, and his character, integrity, and honesty. If the evidence can be produced to sustain rejection of the person on the basis of the latter, it should be done with the knowledge that he is being placed outside the pale of civilized discourse. Are you prepared to render this judgment on Irving Howe?

ERNEST ERBER
Columbia, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Midge Decter's polemic against Irving Howe in the hope, if not the expectation, of finding something new in the way of a critique of socialist ideology. Some of Miss Decter's remarks about the moral and political problems of socialism are intelligent, even thoughtful, but hardly either original or particularly notable. This in itself would not be an intellectual sin were it not that she taxes Howe and his comrades so heavily for not having anything "new or arresting to say."

The substance of the article (aside from a demonstration that the author does not like Irving Howe or his way of writing) can be summarized in two points.

First, that it is "utopian" to believe that there is a way "actively and enthusiastically to oppose American society without at the same time giving aid and comfort to the Soviet Union." If it is true that one cannot radically criticize basic aspects of American capitalism without becoming the moral equivalent of a KGB agent, then much of what has appeared in the pages of COMMENTARY, not only in its more liberal (even socialistic) days but recently, stands indicted.

Second, the notion that "mankind or 'the workers'" have some common interest "above family, clan, and country" is "the ineradicable, arrogant blind spot of socialism." If belief in a transcendent interest in something called "socialism" is absurd, what becomes of a transcendent interest in something called "democracy"?

What exactly does Miss Decter object to (politically) about Irving Howe? That he and some other American socialists—a tiny minority within the world socialist movement—hesitated to support World War II? But Howe long ago admitted, as Miss Decter notes, that he had been morally and politically incorrect in this. That some people use the vocabulary of "socialism" in the interest of totalitarianism or insanity? But, again as Miss Decter admits, Howe was notable for his courage among left-wing intellectuals for attacking the New Left in the 60's on precisely this point.

It seems to boil down to Howe's utopian arrogance in continuing to insist that a vision of a radically better, freer, happier world "is as needed by mankind as bread and shelter."

One would hope that an author who presumably allows at least some value to the prophetic tradition would be less arrogant herself on this score.

JAMES T. BURNETT
Walnut Creek, California

MIDGE DECTER writes:

Some intellectual enterprises are clearly dangerous; none more so, it appears, than offering up critical judgments of sacrosanct figures. Irving Howe, formerly an old battler, has surprisingly become one of these. Thus I am accused by my correspondents of "shrillness," "shrewishness," "arrogance," "mendacities," and other equally attractive things for no other reason than that I failed to sing Howe's praises.

It is not so easy as these correspondents seem to think to account for their outbursts. For one thing, nothing they answer to bears the slightest resemblance to anything I said. Psychoanalysis—a body of theory I have not normally availed myself of in the course of a fairly long career of public argument—has taught us the concept of projection: the attribution to others of motives and behavior that are in fact one's own. Never, I'm afraid, have I seen this concept better illustrated. Nowhere in a lengthy, careful, albeit admittedly stern analysis of Irving Howe's account of himself will readers find the kind of aggression and distortion and free-floating, unsupported hostility that his defenders—all in

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the name of some standard of decency in controversy that *I* am supposed to have violated—indulge themselves in. Like the youth of the late 1960's (whom Howe himself so firmly opposed for their assault upon the fundamental ethical rules of intellectual life), the writers of these letters evidently believe that the moral superiority they attach to their cause extenuates the grossness of their rhetoric and the wild inaccuracy of their characterizations.

As far as Abraham Brumberg is concerned, a couple of examples will have to suffice; to answer him point by point would entail reproducing my entire article. Mr. Brumberg says that I "berate" Irving Howe for "speaking disparagingly of his father." Whereas what I observed about Howe's father is that he was, by Howe's own account, a very different kind of Jew, and a *far more representative one*, than the so-called "fathers" depicted in so stylized a manner in his book about New York Jewish immigrants. He was a small businessman forced by the Depression to become a "worker"; he was attached to the synagogue; he took a dim, or at least nervously disapproving, view of his son's hanging around with the young socialists and speaking at street corners. I did not "berate" Howe, only pointed out that his own private experience should have given him a richer and more varied picture of Jewish immigrant life than he subsequently saw fit to give us. To say that my entirely parenthetical and meant-to-be humorous remark about fumbling around with the female comrades was a demand that he be more forthcoming on the subject is—sorry, the only word for it—just plain nuts. So much for Mr. Brumberg's comprehension of the written word, particularly when it has been used with some care.

Moreover, this incomprehension seems to be retroactive as well. It was too much to expect that we might be spared another round on McCarthyism and COMMENTARY by someone in Mr. Brumberg's ugly mood. He might have refrained, however, from using a technique borrowed straight from McCarthy himself. He selects two sentences, one by Irving Kristol (which has been willfully distorted by tendentious people since the day it was published) and one by Norman Podhoretz. In both cases, these authors were seeking to account for how the late Senator managed to collect such great power rather than to preach easy sermons about him.

As for Mr. Brumberg's assertion that I in effect impose on Irving Howe the demand that he should have supported the Spanish monarchy and the war in Vietnam, it is beneath consideration. The subject was the so-called "third force" or "middle way," and my claim, which Mr. Brumberg was free to argue with sensibly had he known how, was that there are situations (World War II being a notable example) in which there is no such thing. Therefore to cling to it is to opt out of making serious political choices. Radicals and socialists are of course free to construct an argument against this point. But one cannot help wondering why instead they almost universally resort to defamation.

Ernest Erber adds to the melee by stating that I have attacked Irving Howe's moral character and loyalty as a Jew and an American. I ought, he thunders, to "say that despite an ocean of philosophical and political differences . . . [I] accept [Howe] as a loyal American and a concerned Jew, and . . . a normally honest and decent man." First of all, Irving Howe and I do not have "an ocean" of differences —though it is he, not I, who has lately refused to acknowledge the fact; what divides us is rather a thin but ironclad fence, separating those who are willing to shoulder some of the burden of responsibility for the unhappy consequences of their earlier beliefs and those, like Howe, who are not. Nor would I demean him, as Mr. Erber has done, by passing him out a good grade for loyalty. It was not Howe's loyalty I was examining, *nor* his moral character—Mr. Erber for all his high moral tone seems not to realize how presumptuous and patronizing that would be of me and is of him—but the real implications of his position. This is what is known as criticism.

As for James T. Burnett, my point about Irving Howe's utopianism is that it is irresponsible. In some cases, as we have seen to our sorrow, utopianism is a good deal worse that that: the wellspring, indeed, of terror. In Irving Howe's case, it represents an evasion, for the sake of looking pretty, of the kind of unpretty choices that are all too often necessary for the preservation of freedom. It was not nice and fine, for instance, for the British in World War II to answer terror bombing with terror bombing. Does Irving Howe, or Mr. Burnett, now wish they hadn't?

Is all this so difficult to understand? I find it hard to believe. Something else is clearly at work here. I can only come to the conclusion that no one wanted to deal with the actual points I raised in my article. No one seems to realize, either, that to demand a reflexive piety toward so long and arduous and developing an intellectual career as Irving Howe's is to cast that career in a far more suspicious light than I could ever dream of doing.

"A Jewish Romance"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Many thanks for "A Jewish Romance" by Annette Henkin Landau [February]. It is one of the funniest stories I have read in a long time, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

SAM LATTNER

Bronx, New York

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How Important Is the PLO?

Daniel Pipes

I DOUBT that I was alone in being perplexed by the news from Lebanon last summer. Even knowing the record of the Palestine Liberation Organization toward Israel had not prepared me to think that it terrorized Palestinians, too—yet such, it turned out, had been the case in South Lebanon from 1975 to 1982. This not only contradicted theories about the way in which guerrillas depend on the support of the local population among whom they live; it also made no sense that the PLO would alienate its own constituency.

Then, the PLO's military defeat highlighted another anomaly: why was it that an organization enjoying massive international acclaim failed to achieve even a single one of its military objectives against Israel? Why were political successes not translated into strength on the ground?

The continued fever pitch of PLO rhetoric in the aftermath of Lebanon raised other questions: were PLO leaders not aware of the Israeli bulldozers at work on the West Bank, and the short time left before that region became irreversibly part of Israel? Were they oblivious to the absurdity of planning to destroy "the Zionist entity" when their fighters were holed up in camps many hundreds of miles from Israel's borders?

Finally, in perhaps the strangest anomaly of all, the launching of the Reagan initiative in September turned the world's eyes once more on the PLO, as though *its* response were the key to a peace settlement in the Middle East. Could it really be that an organization of refugees had the power to dictate the position of twenty sovereign Arab states, including some of the richest countries on earth, on so large and important an issue as Arab relations with Israel?

On reflection I have reached the conclusion that these paradoxes all derive from one critical fact: support for the PLO comes much more from the Arab states than from the Palestinians themselves. It is Arab help that molds the PLO, that makes it unlike other irredentist movements, and that renders its role so elusive. To understand why the Arab rulers support the PLO, and what that support means, we must begin with pan-Arabism, the ideology that explains so much about political life in the Middle East.

II

PUBLIC life in the modern Middle East is dominated by a contest between two political systems, the traditional and the modern, the Muslim and the Western. While similar contests are taking place in China, India, and Africa, nowhere are the two sides so evenly matched, and nowhere do the contestants disagree on so many issues, as in the Middle East. During the period of colonialization Europeans often flattered themselves with the thought that Western ways had everywhere supplanted traditional attitudes and customs. But in most cases old practices had merely become less visible. Phrasing and appearances usually changed more than actual sentiments; despite the alteration of forms, feelings remained largely constant. What makes Middle East politics —including the politics of the PLO—perplexing to a Westerner is precisely the mix of these traditional Muslim elements with the more familiar Occidental ones.

For one thing, the Muslim legacy of a wide separation between ruler and ruled obstructed the adoption of democratic processes throughout the Middle East. In taking over European forms, most 20th-century Muslim states did in fact institute Western-style elections, but the difference in political background meant that Muslim leaders regarded citizen participation more as a way to prod the populace for support than as a means of creating legitimacy or stability. Practices which came into being after independence betrayed this tendency: one-party elections in Syria, ballots for lesser officials but not for the head of government in Egypt, political parties representing religious groups in Lebanon, democracy alternating with military rule in Turkey, and manipulated elections in revolutionary Iran. Muslim populaces understood the authorities' purposes and responded warily; when they did show up at the polls, their expectations were modest.

DANIEL PIPES, a Council on Foreign Relations Fellow, is the author of *Slave Soldiers and Islam* (Yale University Press). His new book, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power*, will be published by Basic Books in the fall.

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As with elections, nationalism too underwent a metamorphosis in the Middle East. A product of special European circumstances, nationalism had developed out of the slow accumulation of common experience in England, France, Germany, and elsewhere. Shared language, religion, culture, territory, history, and racial characteristics all contributed to this process, with no single factor having decisive importance.

NOTHING comparable to the nations of Europe existed in the Muslim world, especially not in the Middle East. There the guiding principle of political allegiance was pan-Islam, the doctrine that all Muslims should live together in one state under a single ruler, or, failing this, that all Muslim states live at peace with one another. Despite their inability historically to observe the ideals of pan-Islamic unity, Muslims always cherished this goal of brotherhood and emphasized the bonds of Islam. Differences of language, ethnic identity, and other traits did not prevent them from viewing one another as brethren in the faith (in contrast, non-Muslims usually appeared to them to be potential enemies). Muslims paid little attention to nations; loyalties tended to be directed either toward the whole brotherhood of Islam or toward the local community (village, tribe, city quarter, or religious order). Larger territorial units had little political meaning; even the most established of them, such as Egypt or Iran, were cultural abstractions like New England or Scandinavia, not political entities corresponding to existing boundaries.

Because Muslim and Western forms of allegiance were virtual opposites, nationalism was transmuted when it came into contact with pan-Islamic impulses. Whereas nationalism glorifies precisely that mixture of local qualities that makes every people unique, pan-Islam ignores such qualities as language and folk culture and urges instead the unity of believers within a single state.

Attracted to nationalism but wedded to pan-Islam, Muslims attempted to bridge the differences through compromise. Among Arabic-speaking Muslims, it was the drive to unify all Arabs within a single state, known as pan-Arabism, that won the greatest support.

Believing that all Arabic-speakers form a single nation, pan-Arabists reject existing boundaries between Arabs as lines drawn by imperial powers to prevent the Arab nation from uniting and gaining its full strength. They hope some day to erase those lines and create a single Arab state reaching from Morocco to Iraq.

Pan-Arabism rather exactly includes both Muslim and Western elements; its appeal to the unity of Muslims recalls pan-Islam, while its stress on language as the definition of political identity recalls nationalism. (It may be hard to imagine, but even among Arabs, language had little political importance before the 20th century and had almost no role in defining political loyalties; the very notion of an Arab people is thus a result of European influence.) In short, pan-Arabism is a "nationalized" version of pan-Islam. It became a major ideology by the 1920's and a powerful force during the 1950's.

Thanks to pan-Arabism, Arab leaders are uniquely embroiled in one another's affairs. Pan-Arabism sparks grand assertions of friendship, stimulates reciprocal claims, and justifies the habitual flouting of those restraints that normally exist among sovereign states. Thus Arabs find it unremarkable that Algeria should host a movement planning to overthrow the Egyptian regime, that Egypt should send soldiers to Iraq, that Iraq should plot coups against Damascus, that Syria should occupy Northern Lebanon, that Beirut should solicit Saudi advice on negotiations with Israel, that the Saudis should support North Yemen against South Yemen, that the two Yemens should discuss unification between bouts of war—and so on. Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi of Libya may be reviled for his mischief, but no one denies him the prerogative of involving himself in the affairs of his Arab brethren. Pan-Arabism, by inspiring the leaders of twenty-odd states to unite, incites unabashed interference in their mutual affairs.

The Arab states thus differ from the Spanish-speaking countries of South America which accept their separate political identities and do not dream of unifying; instead, these states resemble divided countries such as East and West Germany, North and South Korea, or Communist and Nationalist China, in the feeling of being unnaturally separated and in the expectation of eventual union.

THE immense appeal of pan-Arabism helps explain many of the Middle East's most distinctive political qualities, such as its volatility and the enduring predominance of local conflicts over the Soviet-American rivalry. It also accounts for the involvement of the Arab states in Palestinian affairs, and the special role of the PLO. In the early part of the 20th century Zionist efforts to build a Jewish community in Palestine, and eventually to establish a sovereign state in the area, stimulated the Arabs of the region to seek help from neighboring Arab states; their cry tapped the powerful vein of pan-Arabist feeling. (The support they received bore some resemblance to the support given by Diaspora Jews to the Zionists, for Jews and Muslims emphasize similar bonds of community.) Pan-Arabists then seized on the Palestine conflict and made it the centerpiece of their program; in part they did so because the prospect of losing to the Jews was particularly ignominious, in part because Palestine had strong Islamic associations, in part because the Zionist challenge looked so easy to defeat.

Pan-Arabism then transformed what would have

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been an obscure clash over territory into one of the greatest, most significant land conflicts of the 20th century. If not for the Arabs' impulse to engage in one another's affairs, the Palestinian cause would probably have remained as peripheral to world politics as that of the Armenians or the Eritreans. But the pan-Arabist focus on Zionism as the paramount enemy made the fate of the Palestinians a matter of direct concern to every government between Libya and Iraq. As the unifying element in pan-Arabism, the cause of the destruction of Israel acquired a symbolic importance out of proportion to the issues at hand. With time, it even took on independent existence, bearing its own mystique.

As the principal goal of pan-Arabist politics, the destruction of Israel also became a way for governments to assert their legitimacy; many rulers—Abdel Nasser of Egypt, the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'thists, and, especially, Qaddafi—made their involvement in the "Palestinian cause" a leading warrant of their worthiness to rule. Conversely, the credentials of Arab rulers who did not hew to the standard line on Israel were brought into question (indeed it was expected that any Arab leader who accepted Israel would pay with his life, in the manner of King Abdallah of Jordan, Anwar Sadat, and Bashir Gemayel).

The conflict with Israel thus came to bear on the authority of Arab regimes; giving aid to the Palestinian cause strengthened rulers against challenges from within or meddling from abroad. With the years, Israel's military prowess rendered the idea of destroying it increasingly senseless—yet the failure to find other sources of political legitimacy meant that Arab rulers continued to depend on anti-Zionism.

III

THE significance of anti-Zionism reached so far beyond Palestine that Palestinian Arabs themselves played for the most part a secondary, or lesser, role in it. It was the Arab states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq—that led the struggle against the Jews. From the handful of independent Arab governments in the 1920's to the more than twenty members of the Arab League today, the Arab states have controlled the Palestinian movement by providing massive financial, military, and political support. Even before 1948, Palestinians relied heavily on the money, arms, and diplomatic pressure of the Arab states. From the declaration of Israeli independence until the 1967 war, the states so dominated anti-Zionism that they even suppressed Palestinian efforts to organize. After 1967, when the states retreated in defeat, the Palestinians reemerged as a distinctive force in the form of the PLO;* but even then it was the states that contributed nearly all the resources.

The benefits to the PLO have been staggering. Financial statistics cannot be specified, for the PLO does not circulate its budget, but published reports indicate that in recent years the organization received about $250 million yearly from Saudi Arabia and smaller amounts from other oil states, including $60 million a year from Kuwait. At a summit conference in Baghdad in 1978, the Arab states promised another $100 million annually. Non-Arab governments (such as the Soviet bloc) also gave generously; and if these insisted on cash for arms, third parties might be induced to pick up the tab, as in April 1982 when the Saudis promised $250 million to pay for weapons from Bulgaria, Hungary, and East Germany. When the PLO requested help from the Arab states last summer, the Algerian foreign minister called in the Soviet ambassador in Algiers at four in the morning and gave him a check for $20 million; the weapons reportedly arrived in Beirut several days later by air.

About 5 to 10 percent of the pay of the 300,000 Palestinians working in the Gulf states is withheld by the governments there and earmarked for the PLO; were all of this money to reach its stated destination (which is not the case), it would provide the PLO with about another $250 million a year. Aid also comes from farther away, from radical and Islamic groups around the world: in January 1983, for instance, the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement in Kuala Lumpur gave a check for $80,000 to the local PLO representative. Terrorist activities have also proved a source of funds; the PLO reportedly received $20 million in December 1975 for releasing the OPEC oil ministers it had helped take hostage.

With this capital, the PLO was able to start large-scale business enterprises. In Lebanon, it ran a conglomerate called Samad ("Steadfast") whose 10,000 employees and estimated $40-million gross revenues in 1980 made it one of the country's largest firms. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an organizational member of the PLO, achieved a near-monopoly over steel products in South Lebanon during the late 1970's by importing steel from the Soviet bloc at concessionary prices and paying no import duties (the PLO controlled the ports of Sidon and Tyre). Its factory, the Modern Mechanized Establishment near Sidon, undercut competitors and drove them out of business; then it raised prices and reaped huge profits. Many Lebanese believed that predatory pricing was integral to the PLO's plans to retain control over South Lebanon. In addition to its local investments—a hotel in Lebanon, a chicken farm in Syria—the PLO owns a portfolio of investments in the industrial states, including a disco club in Italy and an airline in Belgium.

* I have been using the term PLO in the singular in this article, without reference to its many factions, since for our purposes these can be seen merely as pressure groups within the larger organization.

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The PLO also controlled most of the approximately $30 million a year sent by the Arab governments to the West Bank and Gaza, though on some occasions Arab states themselves became directly involved. For example, Mayor Elias Freij of Bethlehem received $600,000 from Kuwait in 1977, reportedly in exchange for refraining from speaking of peaceful coexistence with Israel.

All in all, the PLO's annual budget in recent years has been estimated at about $1 billion, prompting *Time* (July 18, 1977) to call it "probably the richest, best-financed revolutionary-terrorist organization in history." Its leaders could enjoy an unusually opulent style of life; on one occasion, three PLO directors lost $250,000 of the organization's money at the gambling tables. If Yasir Arafat maintained an abstemious way of life, other of the top PLO brass were notorious for high living; Zoheir Mohsin, head of As-Sa'iqa, was assassinated while residing in a luxury hotel on the Riviera.

Militarily, too, the PLO benefited from an extraordinary aid program. No revolutionary group ever found procurement so easy. Arms came from every source—even the U.S., via Vietnam and Libya. On uncovering PLO arsenals in Lebanon, the Israelis were stunned by the quantity, diversity, and sophistication of the weapons they found, including: 5,630 tons of ammunition, 1,320 vehicles and troop carriers (several hundred of which were tanks), 33,303 light arms, 1,352 antitank arms, 215 mortars, 62 Katyusha launchers, 88 field cannons, 196 antiaircraft arms, 2,024 items of communication equipment, and 2,387 items of optical equipment. In all, the Israelis carted 4,330 truckloads of PLO materiel out of Lebanon.

Nor could any other liberation group dream of winning the diplomatic standing awarded to the PLO. Two milestones stand out, the 1974 Arab decision at Rabat to make the PLO the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" and recognition of the PLO by the United Nations a year later, culminating in Yasir Arafat's appearance before the General Assembly. During the 1970's, most other international bodies granted observer status to the PLO, which also won the right to open diplomatic missions in several dozen countries. The pressure on its behalf was intense: any government that resisted recognizing the PLO was threatened with oil boycotts, trade sanctions, and the like. Allowing the PLO an office was a minimal price for countries like Japan or Turkey to pay for promised access to oil, employment opportunity, and greater foreign sales. Iraq reportedly offered Spain an oil shipment worth $18 million for a change in attitude toward the PLO.

IV

THE fact that support for the PLO derived mostly from governments had a price. To the extent that the Arab states strengthened the PLO materially, they distorted it politically. Because Arab rulers made the PLO richer and more visible than the scattered and divided Palestinians could have done, its behavior inevitably reflected inter-Arab policies more than Palestinian needs. When conflicts arose, the PLO leaders invariably gave priority to the wishes of Cairo, Amman, Riyadh, Damascus, Baghdad, and Tripoli over the interests of their ostensible constituency. The PLO flourished by becoming an organization answerable to rulers rather than refugees. Neither elected nor in some other manner chosen by the Palestinians at large, Yasir Arafat and his colleagues owed their power more to the interplay of Arab governments than to Palestinian approbation. Dependence on the favor of Arab rulers accounts for the paradoxes posed at the beginning of this inquiry: the illusion of power, extremist ideology, inefficacy, and brutality.

Thus support from the Arab states explains the anomaly of a refugee organization seeming to signal twenty-odd sovereign states what moves to make. It is true that the Arab states listen to the PLO and key their policies to its decisions; but its decisions, in turn, are little more than statements of the consensus of Arab states, however confused a position this may be. Far from formulating policies which the Arab states then adopt, the PLO reflects their will. PLO power is illusory; on its own, it no more influences Middle East politics than does the moon generate light.

The illusion of power is augmented by the fact that, as a symbol of pan-Arabism, the PLO enjoys a special prestige in inter-Arab politics. For this reason, Arab leaders do make efforts to have good relations with the PLO; but these efforts rarely extend to the point of being willing to change policy to accommodate it.

Dependent on kings and presidents, the PLO cannot afford to disobey; should it defy any of the six or seven most important Arab states, it can be punished in a variety of ways. The states can cut off funds and arms, deny it safe haven, promote certain member organizations of the PLO at the expense of others, found rival groups, or lobby against the PLO in inter-Arab councils. (Indeed, over the last twenty years every one of these actions has at some time been taken.) Indicative of the pressure Arab states exert is the fact that at the February 1983 meeting of the Palestine National Council, guests (who mostly came from Arab countries) outnumbered official delegates by a margin of 6 to 1. Aware of its vulnerability, the Palestinian leadership invariably adopts policies that will please the maximum number of its patrons. Only apparently free to do as they wish, Yasir Arafat and his colleagues must in fact express the weighted average of what the Arab states demand.

Until now, this average has always translated into an extremist position, namely, the military

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destruction of Israel. Both its founding document, the Palestine National Charter, and statements by leaders over the years have made it clear that the PLO plans to liquidate Israel through force of arms. To take one example from among hundreds, Yasir Arafat told the Egyptian magazine *Ruz al-Yusuf* (January 3, 1983) that "we have not dropped and we will never drop the military option."

This hard-line policy has remained in place despite all the temptations that have repeatedly been placed before the PLO to recognize Israel's existence. The rewards of such recognition would be great. The United States government, which otherwise refuses to deal with it, would talk to the PLO and thus give it an opportunity to drive a wedge diplomatically between the U.S. and Israel; this would also improve the chances of halting Israeli settlement on the West Bank. Recognition of Israel would win enhanced international respectability for the PLO, and support from many countries at present reluctant to sanction the destruction of the Israeli state and people. The importance of this was made clear in January 1983 by Issam Sartawi, an adviser to Yasir Arafat, who stated that "at the top of our priorities is the need for us in the PLO to complete our recognition by the world." Sartawi went on to state that had the PLO enjoyed wider respectability in the summer of 1982, "Israel would have not dared invade Lebanon and announce that its objective was to slaughter us" (Radio Monte Carlo, January 28, 1983). Also, recognition would put the PLO in a better position to compete with Syria, Jordan, and Egypt to take over should the Israelis evacuate the Golan Heights, the West Bank, or Gaza.

Little would seem to be lost thereby. The PLO has no sensible hope of defeating Israel militarily, either on its own or with any combination of Arab states. The balance of forces is such that the old Arab dream of driving the Jews into the sea has become pure fantasy—for the foreseeable future, at least. Then why not take the commonsensical step of recognizing Israel? Given the lure, why does the PLO refuse to compromise?

Western observers sometimes account for this apparently futile and counterproductive strategy by invoking stereotypes. One explanation holds that the Arabs have a tendency to get carried away with words; they confuse rhetoric and reality. According to this explanation, the PLO is a captive of its own fiery speeches about the imminent Palestine revolution. But no one—and certainly not the PLO leadership—is so stupid. Enchantment with words can no better explain the PLO's unrealistic program than can the love of money explain America's wealth; both arguments reverse symptom and cause. Equally unconvincing is the notion that Arabs have a different logic from ours; there is only one logic and everyone shares it. Just because PLO behavior is not self-explanatory does not make it irrational. There are sensible reasons for the apparently counterproductive action of the PLO, and they tie in with the demands of the Arab states.

After the calamitous defeat of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in June 1967, the states retreated into self-interested nationalism, which implied less attention to anti-Zionism and more attention to *raison d'état*. Whereas Gamal Abdel Nasser had earlier used Israel as a means to stir passions across the Arab world, Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel for the sake of Egyptian interests. Nasser saw the destruction of Israel as a vehicle for uniting the Arabs; Sadat viewed the conflict with Israel as a drain on his country's resources. One stressed pan-Arabist dreams, the other Egyptian needs.

Nearly all the other Arab states also abandoned fervent pan-Arabism, though less dramatically than Egypt. In doing so, they passed the mantle to the PLO, which as a revolutionary movement was expected to succeed where hidebound governments had failed. Arab rulers came to rely on the PLO to maintain pan-Arabism; the organization became the symbol of Arab irredentism, leader of the hard-line position, bearer of the burden thrown off by the states.

Were the PLO to give up the dream of destroying Israel, it too would be putting parochial interests ahead of the good of the entire Arab nation. It is difficult enough for Arab states to take this step. Were the PLO to do so, against the wishes of the states, its position in inter-Arab politics would be destroyed. So long as influential states such as Syria and Libya demand total rejection of Israel by the PLO, the Palestinian leadership can hardly do otherwise.

Thus, to the extent that the cause of the military destruction of Israel provides the PLO with backing from the Arab states, extremism is inherent in its mission.

This means that for the PLO, satisfying the Arab demand for ideological purity counts more than satisfying the interests of Palestinians. The PLO does not pressure Arab governments to enfranchise Palestinian refugees in the various Arab countries in which they have been living since 1948, it does not work to win them citizenship or the right to own land, it does not take other practical steps to help them alleviate their plight. No wonder a 1980 poll revealed that only half of 1,200 Palestinian students in Kuwait considered the PLO to be their sole representative (*Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi*, November 1980).

As for the Palestinians on the West Bank, the leaders needed to promote their interests will not be found in the PLO. While a group of mayors on the West Bank prepared a document in December 1982 calling for the "peaceful settlement of the Palestine problem" through the "mutual and simultaneous recognition" of the PLO and Israel (*Al-Majalla*, December 25, 1982), and while in that

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same month four lecturers from Bir Zeit University stated that most of the students at their university favored territorial compromise with Israel (*Ma'ariv*, December 28, 1982), PLO leaders were reconfirming their intent to destroy Israel militarily. But what do mayors and students matter when heads of state give money, arms, and diplomatic support? Despite the fact that Israel enjoys complete military superiority over the Arabs and will for years to come, despite the daily advance of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, the PLO sticks to its hopeless irredentism. To do otherwise would jeopardize its standing and perhaps even its existence.

The involvement of the Arab states also explains PLO inefficacy; having to become party to inter-Arab disputes distracts attention from its anti-Zionist program. The more the Arab states disagree among themselves, the less power the PLO enjoys. An isolated Syria or a maverick Egypt reduces the pan-Arab consensus that makes the PLO prominent. Just as Israel would have the Arabs at odds, the PLO needs them brought together. But Arab rulers disagree so often that Arafat typically devotes more than half his time to patching up relations among them. Indeed, PLO relations with Arab states have at times soured so badly—armed wars with Jordan and Syria, spy wars with Iraq, cold wars with Egypt and Libya—that these have consumed all the energy intended for the conflict with Israel.

The PLO has also been kept busy by the whole gamut of Arab enthusiasms and crises, such as Ba'thism, Nasserism, the trauma of 1967, the oil weapon, Egypt's peace with Israel, and the disintegration of Lebanon. It needs to fend off the interference of Arab states in its own designated territory: Syria and Jordan compete with it for control of parts of Palestine, and for nineteen years Egypt administered the Gaza Strip. Indeed, the Syrian government has such strong interests of its own in Palestine that, in the words of a PLO aide, "Syria would love to see Israel wipe out the PLO. If only the political shell of the PLO remains, [Syrian leaders] will be able to fill it with their own men" (*Christian Science Monitor*, August 5, 1981). Finally, because pan-Arabism has made the Palestinian cause a critical element in the *domestic* politics of such countries as Iraq, Lebanon, and Libya, that cause has taken on a life of its own in those countries and led to their intimate involvement in PLO affairs. For all these reasons, Palestinian leaders from the Mufti Amin al-Husayni in the 1920's to Yasir Arafat have had to concern themselves no less with inter-Arab affairs than with fighting the Zionists.

After 1967 the PLO had to accept the responsibilities that went with being the conscience, symbol, and pivotal institution of pan-Arabism, even if this meant mobilizing fewer resources for battle against Israel. Pan-Arabist diversions impaired PLO capabilities and help to explain why it fared worse in the military fight against Israel than what its resources should have made possible.

Support from the states also exacts a cost by fostering an unjustified egoism in the leaders of the PLO. On this point they bear a curious resemblance to the shah of Iran, Mohamed Reza Pahlavi. Oil revenues freed the shah from taxing Iranians, and thereby released him from the normal political constraints that accompany the coaxing of money from subjects. Not needing his people's approval, he felt he could do anything he wanted. Seduced by dreams of grandeur, he drafted increasingly splendid plans for Iran which had less and less to do with the wishes of Iranians, until the whole edifice came crashing down. In like fashion, if less grandly, PLO leaders live in a world of their own making; spoiled by easy money from above, they run a guerrilla organization as though it were the decisive factor in Middle East politics, the linchpin of East-West relations, and the key to the oil market. By succumbing to illusions of power, the PLO has become as isolated as the shah.

FINALLY, dependence on the Arab states also goes far to explain the paradox of PLO strength internationally and its wretched relations with ordinary Arabs and Palestinians. For the PLO is simultaneously the UN's most popular liberation front and the movement no Arab state wants to host; the toast of radical and Islamic groups around the world but widely resented throughout the Middle East. On the one hand, it enjoys a voice in Arab councils, wealth, vast military supplies, and a claim to be the political voice of the Palestinians. On the other hand, it regularly murders opponents, relies on mercenaries and children to do its fighting, and uses civilians as military cover.

Of many examples (on the West Bank, in Gaza, Israel, and Jordan), the most dramatic is South Lebanon between 1975 and 1982, where the PLO enjoyed a nearly sovereign authority. As an illustration of its inability to win support from below, developments there repay consideration.

When PLO guerrillas were initially stationed in South Lebanon following the 1967 war, their struggle against Israel enjoyed the sympathy of local Lebanese, especially the Shi'is. Relations between residents and the PLO deteriorated, however, as Israel's overwhelming military superiority dashed hopes of the conflict being moved to Israeli territory. Instead, the PLO settled into South Lebanon. Its troops, better armed and organized than other militias in the area, compelled the Lebanese to supply sustenance, shelter, medical services, and money. By 1975, the PLO constituted an elite that effectively controlled South Lebanon, flouting local regulations and enforcing its will in capricious ways. PLO soldiers billeted themselves in the best houses, grabbed what they

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fancied, expelled property owners, availed themselves of local women, indulged in random violence, directed drug and prostitution rings, and ran protection rackets. Foreign mercenaries employed by the PLO became especially notorious for extracting whatever they could from South Lebanon, and the PLO's thirty autonomous groups, each with its own loosely disciplined troops, wrought havoc with the civilian population.

The result was a reign of terror. For seven years the outside world heard little from South Lebanon —in part because the inhabitants feared retribution if they talked, in part because the PLO kept journalists from the region. When its control was broken and newsmen appeared in June 1982, stories of life under the PLO began to filter out. Everyone seemed to have a tale—Muslim and Christian, Sunni and Shi'i, Lebanese and Palestinian—and was eager to tell it.

Appalling accounts of cruelty and malevolence came to light. Any show of defiance of the PLO met severe punishments. A Muslim religious dignitary in Haruf, Sa'id Badr ad-Din, who refused to incorporate Palestinian themes into his weekly sermons, lost his son, murdered by the PLO. Mahmud al-Masri, a Shi'i religious leader in Ansar, led the opposition to PLO entry into the village in 1980; he was tied up and forced to witness the rape, execution, and mutilation of his fifteen-year-old daughter. On October 19, 1976, about 1,000 PLO troops stormed Ayshiyeh, a small Christian village whose citizens were suspected of cooperation with Israel; the PLO forced all but 65 of the villagers into a church, guarding them with cocked guns while those outside were systematically executed in the streets. The villagers held in the church heard the whole massacre; when let out after two days, they found the bodies lying in pools of blood. To compound its cruelty, the PLO brought a fleet of trucks to the village and emptied the houses during those two days. After the residents buried the dead, all but a few abandoned their homes.

To maintain its reputation, the PLO acted with calculated ferocity. When a search squad in Sidon turned up Israeli money and clothing in a man's house, the PLO took the owner to Sidon's central square, chained his arms and legs to the bumpers of four cars, and ripped him apart; while the body was yet in its death throes the four cars dragged it around the square. Witnesses testified to the sadistic torture carried out at the PLO prison in Sidon, a former municipal school whose basements became notorious. Above its dungeons was an "entertainment center" for the prison commanders, consisting of an iron bed under Stars of David drawn in blood, used for gang rapes. Although the screams of young girls could be heard all over the district, no one dared intervene. Unverified reports had it that when PLO hospital blood reserves ran low, new supplies were obtained by bleeding civilian patients to death. And so on: as the local population became intimidated by such atrocities no one dared challenge the PLO.

Lebanese authorities stood helplessly by. In the words of Khalil Shamrayya, a shopkeeper in Sidon, "Arafat's gangs simply eliminated the rule of law and order and allowed sheer anarchy to reign" (*Ma'ariv*, July 14, 1982). Police and politicians reported to work as usual, but handled only municipal services and other matters disdained by the PLO. As "People's Committees" replaced courts, elected Lebanese officials saluted PLO officers and violence went unpunished. "Ultimate authority was with the Kalashnikov [the Soviet gun] and they had it," observed the prominent Sidon doctor, Ramzi Shabb (*Newsview*, July 27, 1982).

Unable to fight the Israeli army on equal terms, the PLO protected itself with the lives of innocent Lebanese, using civilian facilities—homes, churches, schools, hospitals especially—as shields against Israeli retaliation. Even the Roman ruins at Tyre were converted into a military base, with weapons stored in the seats of the hippodrome. When PLO missiles hit the Galilee, civilians in South Lebanon paid the greatest price, for Israel responded with tenfold punishment. A bitter joke has it that a sheikh once went over to the PLO fighters camped near his village and requested that they fire their rockets at his village rather than into Israel. Mystified, the PLO leader asked the reason; the Lebanese replied, "Every time you shoot three rockets at Israel, they fire back twenty; so do us a favor and shoot at us directly!" In what came to be known as the "last massacre" during the Israeli advance of June 1982, PLO fighters deliberately brought down maximum destruction in South Lebanon, provoking the Israelis into bombing anti-PLO villages (such as Burg-Bahal) by taking up military positions as close to them as possible.

THE Lebanese were also harmed economically. A backward region, South Lebanon could not cope with the large sums of money the PLO dispensed. Severe inflation which began in the mid-70's cut into the real earnings of laborers and reduced the value of savings. It also made working for the PLO, with its high wages, more attractive.

Even Palestinians, who should have benefited from the activities of the PLO, were victimized, as the PLO's constant problems with recruitment demonstrate. Any male Palestinian in Lebanon could receive $150 to $200 a month—as much as an agricultural worker—just for joining a PLO militia; then he had only to train briefly in the use of weapons, participate in parades, and show up for an occasional operation. In addition, his wife got $130 a month plus a small amount for each child. Yet these high wages were not enough, even in combination with a shortage of employment and ideological fervor. The PLO enjoyed the

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enthusiastic support of over twenty Arab states, two dozen other Muslim countries, most of Africa, and the Communist bloc, but it could not attract Palestinian men to fight for its cause. So alienated were Palestinians living in Lebanon from the PLO that it had to take active measures to recruit sufficient numbers of soldiers; characteristically, it resorted to coercion.

In 1968, Muhummad Abd al-Ghani, a thirty-year-old assistant pharmacist, received a letter from Yasir Arafat threatening to expel him from his home and job unless he joined Al-Fatah. Fearing for his life ("If I stay, they may kill me"), he joined As-Sa'iqa, one of Al-Fatah's rival organizations within the PLO, becoming a recruiting agent until an opportunity arose to drop out, which he did. Although rounded up by the Israelis last summer and held in a camp, he said he was pleased with the destruction of the PLO in Lebanon. Now, "they will never catch me. There will be no more Yasir Arafat" (New York *Times,* August 11, 1982).

At the age of sixteen, boys could get $130 a month for joining the youth movement, Ashbal. Boys as young as twelve were compelled to serve. Some schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency required youths, on penalty of expulsion, to fulfill an annual PLO tour of duty, lasting from one to three months; other schools required daily military drills of male students. The Israelis—after getting over the initial shock of being shot at by children—captured more than 200 soldiers under twelve years of age. The PLO put up spot checkpoints to catch Palestinians evading the draft. On occasion Fatah soldiers surrounded the refugee camps, closed the exits, and searched the houses for eligible young men.

Palestinians who left the refugee camps hoping to become integrated into Lebanese society were harassed, forced either to serve in the Palestine Liberation Army or to buy their way out of duty. Several thousand mercenaries from a dozen or so countries, including the Arab states, Senegal, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, took their money and replaced them in the field. Indian mercenaries in Lebanon in the fall of 1981 numbered nearly 1,000; acording to a magazine investigation, most of them took up military service when they failed to get other work (they had entered Lebanon illegally), and they earned about $200 a month. So desperate was the PLO for fighters, it paid Lebanese beggar boys like young Haysam Muhammad Rabi'a $250 to enlist in the infantry. But such recruits made poor soldiers; Haysam was captured by Phalange troops in June 1982 as his unit attacked the town of Bhamdam while in a drugged and drunken condition.

The PLO's response to the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982 illustrated the way its leaders distinguished their own interests from the Palestinians' as a whole. At a critical time in July, as the city of Beirut ran short of food supplies, the PLO commandeered a United Nations warehouse in West Beirut, blocking the distribution of flour, rice, sugar, corned beef, and milk powder to 30,000 Palestinians, including many homeless families from South Lebanon. Worse yet, according to Sa'd Milham, a seventy-eight-year-old Palestinian, the PLO used Palestinian civilians—their own people—as cannon fodder. When inhabitants of the Ein Hilwe refugee camp in Sidon took shelter in a mosque, the fighters pushed them outside to draw Israeli fire; those who refused to cooperate were shot at in the mosque. On a larger scale, the PLO used the entire civilian population of West Beirut as a shield, letting noncombatants suffer the worst casualties and hoping that civilian deaths would so upset world opinion the Israelis would be compelled to call off their siege.

V

Assessments of the PLO are often confused by the fact that it provides services to Palestinians, employs them, and even sometimes protects them. Can an organization that performs all these functions really be so harmful to its own people?

To understand this better, it is helpful to view the PLO as a government rather than as a guerrilla organization, for its behavior resembles that of "progressive" regimes in the Middle East far more closely than that of other "liberation movements." Certainly, PLO treatment of civilians in South Lebanon makes it unique among guerrilla groups: Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwean forces terrorized white Rhodesians but not the Zambians among whom for years they lived, and the Sandinistas did not harm Nicaragua's neighboring peoples. The Communist movement in China, the FLN in Algeria, and for that matter Menachem Begin's Irgun would have collapsed had they treated their own people as does the PLO.

The PLO can act as it does because it does not depend on support from below; so long as it satisfies the Arab rulers, it monopolizes the Palestinian national movement and can behave as an established government. The qualities it displays—disproportionate involvement in international politics, ideological extremism, grandiose ambitions, brutality—are the hallmarks of most Middle Eastern regimes; they are especially characteristic of the regimes which, like the PLO, live off money from outside sources—in this case, oil revenues. They, like the PLO, do provide basic services and do build economically—even as they base their contacts with their people on force and intimidation. The Syrian authorities conquered their own city of Hama in early 1982 at the expense of thousands of civilian lives (estimates of the death toll vary between 3,000 to 25,000). The Sunni rulers of Iraq wage war on the Kurds and repress the Shi'is. South Yemen lives in a darkness

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so complete the outside world knows almost nothing about it. Qaddafi has turned Libya into a maelstrom.

In short, the PLO's acts of violence against its own people—grenades against laborers seeking work in Israel, bullets for those on the West Bank and Gaza who disagree with its policies, truncheons for those living in the camps—closely resemble the policies of the governments that champion it most fervently. Remove the framework of a "liberation movement," and what remains is the sort of dictatorial regime all too familiar in the Middle East. Only the fact that the PLO does not rule a territory endows it with the aura of romance lacking in "progressive" states already in power. But the PLO's record should make its character clear enough. Like other radical movements, this organization appeals to two groups primarily—the elite that it benefits and the distant admirers who stay far enough away to avoid the consequences.

VI

Recognizing the critical role of Arab help has several implications for Middle East politics. First, the PLO has very little of the political power so often ascribed to it. It may appear to shape the policy of most Arab states, but in fact it reflects their wishes. It brings up the rear, echoing and rephrasing the weighted average of Arab sentiments. This implies that it will moderate only when its Arab patrons want it to; so long as the Arab consensus needs it to reject Israel, it must do so. Aspiring peacemakers in the Middle East must therefore not make settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute contingent on PLO concurrence, for this is to give a veto to the organization least prone to compromise.

Second, while Arab rulers make the PLO rich and prominent, they also prevent it from becoming a representative body, an effective one, or a decent one. So long as it exists, the PLO will continue to ill-serve Palestinians by subordinating their interests to those of Qaddafi, Fahd, Assad, and Saddam Husayn. Do the Palestinians have an alternative to the PLO? Can they develop their own institutions, independent of the Arab states, which would cast off the PLO's illusory ambitions, discard its autocratic structure, accommodate Israel's existence, and promote practical interests? The "New Palestinian Movement" reportedly organized last fall in South Lebanon, the attempt of Palestinians living in the West to organize politically, or the efforts of West Bank mayors are moves in this direction. But their hopes of success must be slim, for no fledgling refugee organization has much chance against the weight of Arab consensus, which is still vested in the PLO.

Third, only the Arab states—and not Israel—can kill the PLO. By itself, Israeli force of arms, no matter how overwhelming, cannot crush this symbol of pan-Arabism; the PLO will last so long as it serves a purpose for the Arab states. The key Arab states (Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia) will join Egypt in recognizing Israel only when they have enough confidence in their own rule to dispense with hostility to Israel as a source of legitimacy; or when, as in Egypt, the endless futility of anti-Zionism makes it more of a political liability than a benefit. At that moment the PLO will lose both its support and its *raison d'être*.

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The "Neutralism" of E. P. Thompson

Scott McConnell

OVER the past years E.P. Thompson, the British social historian, has become the most influential intellectual figure of the European campaign against nuclear weapons. His books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles permeate the British political debate; his formulations have touched all the corners of Western Europe and have been hailed in America as well. In his native land the media treat him with the deference reserved for living legends. Even magazines and newspapers that have remained skeptical of his message outdo themselves in inflating his personal prestige. The London *Observer* writes that Thompson's "goodness is unquestioned by his fiercest opponents," while a profile in the London *Times* finds that he "stands, as it were, on the crest of a hill, looking two ways at once, making his deductions about the future from his knowledge of the past." One British writer has been moved to suggest that in Thompson, the peace movement has found its Luther.

The note of Thompson's which resounds most clearly among his followers is, of course, the fear and hatred of nuclear weapons, their delivery systems, and the arms race which beckons them on. Sentences like the following, from his lecture "Beyond the Cold War," display the Thompson argument at its most attractive: "Human ingenuity has somehow created these immense destructive powers, which now appear to hang over us, alienated from all human control. They are now talking of siting laser weapons on the moon—weapons which, in a literal sense, will be lunatic." These beguiling words clearly delineate the central front of contention: "They" are the weapons-builders and strategists; "us," the people, who deserve the chance to live out our lives without having to face a historical tragedy of unprecedented dimensions.

Thompson's placement of the central antagonism above and apart from ideology and politics allows him to cast for followers with a wide net. He portrays his campaign as a popular challenge to the military structure of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, promising advantage to neither and implying nothing in particular about the ideological reordering of British politics. In one sense it is hardly surprising that Thompson should take this stance. Those in Britain who have been bestirred to march behind the banners of CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and END (European Nuclear Disarmament) are, in their great majority, middle-class people quite deaf to the siren call of radical politics. To thrive as a mass movement, the peace campaign must appear to be animated by impulses which are essentially conservative—that is, primarily, by the desire to protect an existing political and cultural arrangement from the threat of a nuclear war which would quite evidently destroy it.

But it is precisely Thompson's pretense of political neutrality which merits serious examination. For his professed stance of neutrality between capitalism and Communism, and between the United States and the Soviet Union, flies in the face of thirty years of political writings and commitments. While Thompson's recent pronouncements on peace deserve criticism in their own terms, his ideological biography helps to illuminate the political motive that drives them. Indeed, that biography makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that Thompson's peace advocacy is, in Clausewitz's phrase, a continuation of politics by other means.

THOMPSON joined the British Communist party in 1942, when he turned eighteen, and left it in 1956. To the party he brought a Cambridge (and prep-school) education, literary talent, and a durable utopian aspiration. His first major work of history, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), put these qualities on display. The work is also a striking example of history written in the service of a political cause. In it Thompson seeks to reclaim his hero from a sanitizing "Morris myth" which emphasizes his quaint and archaic guild socialism and his contributions to the arts-and-crafts movement of the 19th century. Instead, Thompson inducts Morris into the ranks of revolutionary socialism and rushes him to the historical front:

> In Britain it seems that the traditions of peasant art are dead; nothing could revive them—short of revolution. But in Asiatic Russia, in China, in all of Eastern Europe we are witnessing a popular art that is cherished by the people, and

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that is reviving and strengthening its hold alongside the advance of Socialist industry. Twenty years ago, even among Socialists and Communists, many must have regarded Morris's picture of "A Factory as it Might Be" as an unpractical poet's dream. Today visitors return from the Soviet Union with stories of the poet's dream already fulfilled.

Communism's traumatic year of 1956—which began with Khrushchev's critique of Stalinism at the 20th Party Congress and ended with the Soviet invasion of Hungary—saw Thompson's departure from the British party. It was in many ways a reluctant parting, and it elicited little in the way of a reappraisal of his past commitments. The immediate issue was an intra-party newsletter, the *Reasoner*, which Thompson and a colleague had begun to publish in the aftermath of Khrushchev's speech. They had worried that the British party's failure to adopt a more independent position toward the Soviet Union was driving its members to "anti-Soviet attitudes dangerous to the cause of peace and socialism." Yet even this mild demurral brought party discipline down upon their heads, and Thompson and his colleague were suspended. Under suspension, and in the wake of the invasion of Hungary, Thompson resigned.

Years later Thompson would speak of the "stubborn pride" he felt over the fact that he and others who left the British party in 1956 had refused "to enter into the well-worn paths of apostasy" or to play "the accepted role, in liberal capitalist society, of Public Confessor or Renegade." This is a justified boast. For whatever criticisms Thompson would make of Stalinism, he never challenged the central Leninist idea of the one-party state or the bureaucratic ownership of all of the means of production. His departure did, however, liberate him from the onus of depicting Soviet reality as the fulfillment of socialist aspiration. After 1956, Thompson became a sort of fellow-traveler with his own car, intermittently defending aspects of the Soviet experience and proclaiming that its blemishes should have no bearing on anyone's judgment of Communism as a social system.

RIGHT away Thompson began a publication, the *New Reasoner*. He quickly published a long article on "socialist humanism," a movement which he thought was destined to sweep away the remnants of Stalinism in Russia and restore the shaken confidence of Western Communists in the revolution. Only the "solidly based fear of aggression from American imperialism," he wrote, held Stalinism in power. This theme, with attendant variations, became a leitmotif in Thompson's work over the next quarter-century. Its implication is quite clear: since Communism's flaws are attributable to its enemies, the path to its redemption must begin with the weakening or elimination of those enemies.

In 1959 he returned to social prophecy. "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," he wrote, "will prove to be the area of expanding liberty and human fulfillment whereas the West, unless transformed by a strong democratic and revolutionary socialist movement, will prove to be the area of encroaching authoritarianism." But therein lay the problem. There was no such "revolutionary socialist movement" in the West. In 1960 Thompson published two essays exploring the reasons for this, and suggesting a strategy for creating just such a movement.

The first of the essays, "Outside the Whale," blames the absence of a revolutionary movement on a betrayal by British intellectuals. What they betrayed was their socialist fervor of the 1930's. The chief culprit is George Orwell, who had the bad taste to draw conclusions about Communism from his experience with it. Orwell's apostasy, according to Thompson, consisted of describing Communism by its "deformities," without reference to "the nature and function of the movement itself." Thompson singles out for particular censure Orwell's essay, "Inside the Whale," which struck hard at the embrace of Stalinism by left-leaning intellectuals. In that work, Thompson argues, "the aspirations of a generation were buried"—with the consequence that nearly the entire British intelligentsia had retreated to what Thompson calls "the Nato-politan ideology," whose defining feature is a disenchantment with revolutionary socialism.

In the second essay, "Revolution," Thompson suggests a way to circumvent the roadblock. Here he attacks the Labor party, which, with its strategy of bringing incremental improvements to the conditions of working-class life, will never establish real socialism. A more decisive rupture with capitalism is required, he writes. But the Leninist-Trotskyite model of armed confrontation between the working class and the rest of society also seems unlikely to succeed. He asserts that the "transfer of class power" will require a break with "parliamentary fetishism," but argues that a revolutionary coalition cannot be based on the working class alone. A broader coalition of forces is needed—and this is more likely to emerge in the context of an international crisis.

Thompson points to a possible catalyst: the protest marches then being organized by the CND against the British nuclear arsenal. "Should the protest in Britain gain sufficient strength to force our country out of NATO," he wrote in 1960, "consequences will follow in rapid succession." The United States might reply with economic sanctions, which would force Britain to choose between compliance and a far-reaching reorientation of trade. This "dilemma . . . would agitate the consciousness of the whole people." Politics would spill into the street and "ideological antagonisms would sharpen." The same popular en-

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ergies which were mobilized in World War II could be mobilized once more, this time against America. "One choice would disclose another, and with each decision a revolutionary conclusion would become more likely."

This remarkable scenario proved stillborn in the early 60's. Unilateral-disarmament proposals met with decisive defeat within the Labor party, and soon afterward the protests dribbled out. Twenty years would pass before Thompson returned to the issue.

During the 1960's Thompson's political voice lapsed into near silence, and his energies were increasingly devoted to the scholarly discipline of social history. His renowned study, *The Making of the English Working Class*, appeared in 1963, inspiring a generation of historians to emulation or debunking. The book's stated purpose—"to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' handloom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded followers of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity"—was pursued with unflagging energy and literary verve. Thompson's presentation reopened a field which had grown arid from yielding too many statistical studies by economic historians. Neither the book's frequently noted exaggerations nor its avowed political intent—as in the hope expressed by Thompson that "causes which were lost in England might, in Asia or Africa, yet be won"—detracted from its provocative merit.

In the dozen years after the appearance of *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson tacked backward in time in his choice of studies, to 18th-century urban crowds, criminality, and the study of law and class hegemony. The books and articles he produced during that period breathe empathy with society's underdogs, and their political lessons are drawn with judiciousness and little Marxian dogma. Yet what is remarkable in the light of these works is Thompson's relative *lack* of empathy with the greater part of the oppressed of his own epoch. For he is quite numb to the experience of hundreds of millions who have lived out their lives, or had them ended, under our century's experience with Communism.

THIS double standard was defended by Thompson in 1973 in his first serious political essay in nearly a decade, an "Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski." In 1956 the Polish philosopher had been one of the voices of Marxist revisionism whom Thompson had admired. But since coming to the West in 1968 Kolakowski had become a more open critic of the Marxian revolutionary ideal altogether. Against Kolakowski's disenchantment, Thompson set out the reasons for his own continued fidelity; his essay is an important elaboration of the ideological perspective which informs his disarmament crusade of today.

Some of the reasons advanced by Thompson are long-standing leftist commonplaces. There is the perennial attribution of Communism's "deformities" to the West. The failure of Communism to renew itself in 1956 is a "failure imposed by the West . . . [since] the manifest function of the statist oligarchies in the socialist countries is the organizing of defense against capitalist aggression." Although the nature of this aggression cannot easily be specified, Thompson suggests a scenario of "Sherman tanks rolling into the East, breathing . . . freedom of capital down the barrels of their guns." This, one might remark, is not a fantasy which seems ever to have disquieted the Soviet general staff. "The first socialist revolution," Thompson opines, was obstructed by "contingencies, accidents, and events and the logic of polarities within a divided world." Yet this could be said about any new government which has ever come into being. It is a logic which could be used to justify Nazism.

But Thompson has prepared a fallback position. "I still reject," he neatly declares, "any description of Communism or of Communist-governed societies which defines these in terms of their ruling ideologies or the institutions of their ruling casses." Instead we are instructed to attend to "the alternative meanings, values, traditions, and potentials they may contain." Real Communism, in other words, exists not in the lived social experience of Communist countries, but somewhere else—in the Prague Spring, perhaps. As for the crushing of the Prague Spring with tanks, that is not Communism but another problem altogether, appropriately subsumed under "defense against capitalist aggression." Thompson has traveled around this circle many times.

Finally Thompson brings forth against Kolakowski another proposition, one which those less experienced with historical archives might not have hit upon. "To a historian," he avers, "fifty years is too short a time to judge a social system, if such a system is arising." Fifty years was ample time to consolidate the revolution, murder the socialist opposition, eliminate all freedoms of speech and publication, shut down the elected parliament, destroy the agricultural system, conquer and collectivize a dozen neighboring countries, establish a gargantuan system of slave labor, commit political murders on a Hitlerian scale, and, finally, brandish a nuclear arsenal unprecedented in size at every nation in the world where people are free to elect their rulers. But according to Thompson, it is "too short a time to judge."

The root of his serenity lies in the phrase, "if such a system is arising." For that Communism is the world's future—of that, Thompson is certain. "No matter how hideous the alternative may seem, no word of mine will wittingly be added to the comforts of that old bitch gone in the teeth,

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consumer capitalism," he writes. This is a colorful way of saying his mind is made up; such pronunciamentos come easily to those who know history's ultimate direction. Indeed Ezra Pound, who in 1920 [illegible] described bourgeois capitalism as "an old bitch gone in the teeth," embraced the future with equal decisiveness when he jumped on the train called fascism.

These ideological sallies, it must be said, left scant ripples on the surface of British political discourse. Thompson's long-winded explanations of where, precisely, he stood in the Marxist tradition mattered to few. But in late 1979, in the aftermath of the NATO decision to deploy cruise and Pershing missiles in response to the deployment of SS-20's by the Soviet Union, he changed the subject. One need not speculate on the particular events which prompted the change. It is true that Thompson focused his concern on the campaign for unilateral disarmament right after returning from a visit to Bulgaria, in the fall of 1979, where preparations were just beginning for the Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council festival, planned for Sofia the following year (preparations which, it has been noted, followed directly upon the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan). But Thompson did, after all, have personal reasons for his visit (his brother died in Bulgaria during the war). Moreover, he had not been a party man for some time, and he was certainly able to conceive of the significance of the peace issue without higher guidance.

In any event, the essays which began to pour from Thompson's pen in 1980 do differ dramatically from his previous interventions on contemporary questions. Thompson had by now learned to keep silent about socialism. No longer did he rush to tell his readers what sort of revolution he dreamed of; all systemic criticisms of "that old bitch gone in the teeth, consumer capitalism" were jettisoned. By changing the subject from socialism to the dangers of nuclear war, he captured a wider audience almost immediately. Within six months of shutting up about Marx and William Morris, E.P. Thompson was transformed from a respected but relatively little known Marxist historian into a media figure of tremendous stature.

Early in 1980, Thompson explained his change of emphasis in an essay published in the *New Left Review*, "Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization." The guiding idea of this essay is that the possession of nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery systems determines the nature of society. The United States and the Soviet Union do not just possess military-industrial complexes, they *are* such complexes. This is not an idea that can be pursued very far, nor is it certain Thompson so intends it. The political point of the essay is more important. Thompson calls upon British Marxists to mute their ideological postures and join forces with elements of the Labor party, with ecologists, and with religious groups in a campaign against nuclear weapons. It is a call for something like the Popular Front of the 1930's, in which revolutionary goals were temporarily put aside in the service of coalition politics. The Marxist Left should cease speaking of the Bomb as a "class issue," and adopt, instead, a tactical stance of neutralism between the two military blocs.

FREED of his ideological encumbrances, Thompson went into the new campaign with passion. He helped to organize a new peace group, European Nuclear Disarmament (END), whose goal was to mobilize citizens from East and West to free all of Europe from nuclear weapons. He haunted his readers with terrifying renditions of the nuclear risks Britain ran because of its alliance with the United States. His dismissal of the strategy of nuclear deterrence ("a pitiful, lightweight theory") was presented as the searching intervention of a very moral man peering into the arcane world of soulless strategists. As a counterpoint to the hard vision of the defense experts, he proposed a majestic redemptive rhapsody: a Europe united "beyond the cold war" as a place where "constructive elements" from the East embraced sensible men and women from the West to forge the moral regeneration of the European continent. These compelling themes, elegantly presented, fell upon fertile ground.

Richard Barnet, in a recent piece on Thompson's new book, *Beyond the Cold War,** wrote that Thompson displays "a formidable command of the technical literature" of armaments, and that he and other members of the European peace movement have "learned to talk about nuclear weapons like nuclear strategists." Yet this impression is unlikely to be derived from the text itself. About *American* nuclear strategy Thompson is quite articulate. He writes about it with a good deal more color than the Soviet diplomats who contribute an occasional guest column to the opinion pages of European newspapers. He does, however, make the same points. The Americans, whom he describes as "infantile" or, alternatively, as the "alchemists of superkill," are said to be preparing a nuclear war for Europe. They have designated the "people of Europe" as a "sacrificial proxy" for this war, while they remain safe in "Sanctuary USA." To clinch his point he refers often to NATO military exercises, in which, he correctly points out, contingency plans have been prepared for nuclear strikes behind the lines of Warsaw Pact forces.

But Thompson invariably leaves something out

* Reviewed by Patrick Glynn in the January 1983 COMMENTARY.

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of these menacing scenarios, and this should surprise anyone who thinks him possessed of "a formidable command of the technical literature." For what he leaves out is nothing less than the central subject of that literature, namely, the question of how NATO should respond to a Soviet attack. For the nations of the Warsaw Pact, at what would seem to be a substantial cost to their own domestic economies, maintain a very large military force poised on the frontiers of Western Europe. Its numerical superiority over the NATO forces is 2.64 to 1 in tanks, 4.83 to 1 in land-based bombers, and over 5 to 1 in lighter combat aircraft. Unlike the NATO units which in their maneuvers practice retreat, defensive battle, and counterattacks, the Warsaw-Pact forces train in rapid advance, assaults, and river crossings, utilizing airborne operations ahead of the advancing main force and chemical weapons to neutralize defensive positions. This is not to suggest that the Soviet army and its allies plan to do what they train to do. But it would be imprudent of the NATO nations not to develop some strategy to deter such an assault; after all, the Soviet Union has sent its armies across its borders several times since 1917, and is a much larger country as a result.

Thompson's discussion of intermediate-range missiles is equally evasive. For the past twenty years NATO strategists have debated what sort of force structure is required to "couple" America's strategic nuclear arsenal to the defense of Western Europe. The intent has always been to make it clear to the Soviets that if they launched an attack the resulting tragedy would not be limited to Western Europe. The SS-20, which the Soviets began to aim at Western Europe in the halcyon days of the Helsinki agreements in the mid-1970's, made this problem much knottier. The weapons seemed designed for a quick strike at NATO's airfields and communications facilities, utilizing warheads small enough to avoid massive civilian casualties. This posed the question of whether, in response to such a strike, the United States really would escalate to a catastrophic strategic exchange. The answer given was NATO's decision to install some American strategic forces (cruise and Pershing missiles) which would necessarily be engaged in any Soviet nuclear strike at Europe. So much for the idea that the Americans wish to use Europe as a "sacrificial proxy" while they remain safe in "Sanctuary USA."

But if Thompson's rendition of the decision neatly avoids all mention of its intent and effect —that is, to couple America's fate with Western Europe's—he does seem clear on one point. He opposes cruise missiles, Pershing missiles, *and* the SS-20. He goes so far as to call the SS-20 "foul and unnecessary," and advocates that all three systems be abandoned. But when, in late 1981, the Reagan administration suggested just that, with its zero-option proposal, Thompson corrected himself. The zero option, he declared, was "either a tough negotiating position or a provocation." He still does not care for any of the missiles, but lest his position be misunderstood, he has stated that he would oppose the NATO missiles whether the SS-20 was dismantled or not.

From the outset of his campaign for peace, Thompson has acknowledged that if the disarmament movement were to appear to be a Soviet-orchestrated movement directed, like the peace campaigns of the 1950's, only against NATO weapons, its potential following and impact would be severely limited. So he has made a considerable effort to portray himself as a foe of both military blocs. At the same time, however, the practical emphasis of his activity, as we have seen, lies on one side of the equation only—that is, for the unilateral disarmament of Western Europe. In order to reconcile this emphasis with his claim to evenhandedness he has repeatedly insisted that his work for the unilateral disarmament of Western Europe is part of a continent-wide process which challenges Soviet hegemony over *Eastern* Europe as well.

His claim that the movement is not one-sided rests upon two assertions. The first is simply that the Soviet Union has no military or imperialist designs that would be served by Western disarmament. It is, Thompson says, fundamentally a defensive power with a "siege" mentality, and as such presents no real military threat to the nations of Western Europe. This has not been an easy case to make at a time when Soviet forces or Soviet proxies have been engaged in aggressive wars on four continents, but Thompson has had years of practice at it. Exemplary is his apologia for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That country, he told an interviewer, is a "client nation" of the Soviet Union to begin with—and in any event the true responsibility for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan lies with NATO and Margaret Thatcher. Thus "NATO played the cruise missile ball, which struck the Afghan black, which rolled neatly into the Russian pocket. It was as if Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Pym, and Mr. Bill Rodgers were there, perched on the leading Soviet tanks, waving at the astonished people of Kabul." Mrs. Thatcher leading the Soviet tanks into Kabul—this is a very high order of dialectical thinking.

The other argument upon which Thompson rests his assertion that the peace movement is not merely an adjunct of Soviet diplomacy is a far more innovative one. The movement for Western disarmament, he has maintained, parallels the efforts of Eastern Europeans to win greater freedom for themselves; both Solidarity's fight to exist and the campaign against cruise missiles are part of the same far-reaching historical process

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to put the fractured continent back together again.

Initially, Thompson presented this claim with caution, as a goal rather than as a description of a process already under way. "Our movement cannot succeed," he wrote in early 1981, "unless we call forth reciprocal responses from the East." Soon such caution was abandoned. "The Western peace movements," he proclaimed in his "Beyond the Cold War" lecture, "extend their support to the Polish renewal and to Solidarity, and to the movements for libertarian dissent in the Warsaw bloc. And from Eastern Europe also, voice after voice is now reaching us—hesitant, cautious, but with a growing self-confidence—searching for the same alliance: peace and freedom. . . . Eastern Europe has commenced its own self-liberation."

This is a remarkably suggestive statement. First, it implies that there exists in Eastern Europe a political groundswell, a "self-liberation" movement capable of influencing the diplomatic postures of the governments there in a manner comparable to what happens in the West. Second, it confers on Western peace marchers some noble political virtues: by striking at Europe's links to America, Thompson informs them, they are helping to dismantle the totalitarian structures of Eastern Europe. Finally, Thompson presents himself as an appropriate translator of the voices of libertarian dissent in Eastern Europe, and proclaims to his Western audiences that these voices share his political goals.

However, as Thompson has been forced to acknowledge, some of these voices in the East have been less enthusiastic than he over the prospect of the unilateral disarmament of the West. One Czech, Václav Racek, wrote to Thompson that the whole business reminded him of the 1938 sort of appeasement, and that Western Europeans would be better advised to heed the inextricable links between militarism and the means by which Communism maintains its rule. In reply, Thompson said that Racek had probably been deluded by Western intelligence services.

Nor did Solidarity, in its legal life span the most plausible agent for the process of self-liberation that Thompson alludes to, find Western unilateral disarmament a particularly uplifting idea. Actually, although Thompson uttered many fine phrases about Solidarity, nowhere in his vast peace opus is a Solidarity leader ever quoted; nowhere in the many colorful pamphlets distributed by END has Solidarity been permitted to speak in its own name. This is in itself noteworthy, for END, of which Thompson is the "coordinator" for Eastern Europe, boldly advertises that it seeks "a European-wide campaign, in which every kind of exchange takes place." Yet END made no exchanges or contacts with Solidarity during the sixteen months of its legal existence.

The reasons for Thompson's reluctance to transmit the true feelings of Solidarity to the Western peace movement were suggested by him in an article he wrote in the aftermath of the imposition of martial law in Poland. "Too many of Solidarity's leaders and advisers looked to the wrong friends in the West," he said. Later he elaborated. Solidarity, he noted, "had certain features which might wrinkle the nose of the purist: it was nationalist, Catholic, predominantly male. . . ." Its "internationalist perspectives were confined and confused."

Maybe martial law was just as well. Thompson certainly has given it the benefit of the doubt. General Jaruzelski has found, Thompson claims, "a Polish solution arising from Polish conditions." Seven words and the Soviet Union is exonerated. The Western governments, by contrast, are not so innocent: they, wrote Thompson, are "accomplices." Their "showy nuclear posturing was a factor beckoning on the declaration of martial law." This is a rationalization that has not even occurred to the propaganda specialists of the Polish junta.

Evidently the voice of Solidarity is not among that multitude of voices reaching out to Thompson from the East in search of an alliance for "peace and freedom." Nor, presumably, is Václav Racek's voice the sort he has in mind. But there is in Hungary an "autonomous peace movement" which has become END's showcase illustration. Last fall, Thompson visited Budapest where he spoke before the Communist party's official peace committee, and also, at his insistence, gave the same speech to private Hungarian citizens. One can imagine the excitement—after years of invoking the voices reaching him from Eastern Europe, Thompson finally found himself before a non-official group from the other side. Two young Hungarians spoke, and Thompson spoke, and a brightly colored pamphlet was rushed into print by END to commemorate the occasion.

What did the Hungarians say? Ferenc Koszegi got right to the point; he spoke about freedom. "What is meant in this context," Koszegi proclaimed, "is freedom to choose our fate with regard to nuclear destruction." The only freedom that matters is freedom from nuclear war. This is perhaps not a definition which would have completely satisfied our century's victims of the totalitarian experience, but it is one which suits Thompson's purposes completely. He can henceforth claim in all seriousness that there are voices reaching him from Eastern Europe perfectly in tune with his own.

THUS we come to the political heart of Thompson's crusade. He proposes the shredding of the Atlantic alliance and the unilateral nuclear disarmament of the states of Western Europe. He professes, and perhaps believes, that this policy will shame the Soviet Union into

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a parallel disarmament and tempt it to loosen its control of the states of Eastern Europe. He suggests that Western Europeans, disarmed, utilize their status as moral exemplars to mount a more assertive campaign of building bridges to the peoples of the East, in order to heal the fracture across the heart of the continent.

It is improbable, to say the least, that disbanding NATO and disarming would lead to the kinds of results that Thompson claims to desire. To imagine that Western Europeans would have the political will to challenge the internal-security structures of the Communist bloc from a base of self-imposed and self-proclaimed military vulnerability is to imagine a very large fantasy. Western Europeans, wedded, in Thompson's own felicitous phrase, to the imperatives of the "Euro-stomach," are unlikely to take great risks from a position of great weakness. Few peoples in history have done so.

What is far more likely is that the disarmed states of Europe would pursue policies of accommodation and appeasement of the Soviet Union far beyond anything which has already taken place. There is no great reason to suppose that this accommodation would stop before the reordering of the domestic institutions of Western Europe. The free election of representatives to parliament has always been a direct affront to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. The relative success of the economies of Western Europe, and the freedoms of its citizens, make it a beacon of hope to the peoples of the Soviet empire—a beacon which that empire's rulers would be all too happy to extinguish. History yields few examples of periods where rich, weak, and divided states bordering on a large and well-armed empire have maintained their autonomy for very long. If disagreements were to arise, the nations of Western Europe, deprived of any military means of deterring even the most gently insinuated of military threats, would have an overwhelming incentive to see reason in the Soviet view of things.

IF THE policy Thompson proposes is unlikely to yield the rosy consequences he has so eloquently described, it is legitimate to ask whether he is aware of it. For E.P. Thompson is not a fool. He is a revolutionary socialist. Before he launched his peace barrage he had been writing, intermittently, for more than thirty years about strategies to bring socialist revolution to Britain. When confronted with the implications of his past allegiances he retorts with the evasive truism that no politics, not even conservative politics, would survive a nuclear holocaust. But it would be unwise to assume that he has forgotten the scenario so deftly sketched in his 1960 essay, "Revolution." There, as we have seen, he formulated the linkage explicitly: the severing of the Atlantic alliance would tilt the political balance in Britain from "parliamentary fetishism" toward a "revolutionary conclusion." Nor is this scenario absurd. But thirty years in the political wilderness have taught Thompson that advertising his revolutionary beliefs is a poor recipe for mobilizing broad numbers of followers.

Some writers on the Left of END have questioned the need for this dissimulation of the movement's ultimate political goals. Raymond Williams, in a perceptive response to Thompson in the *New Left Review*, has pointed out that many in the disarmament movement consciously utilize the legitimate fear of nuclear war to weaken the defense system of "imperialism"—i.e., the Western democracies—in order to tilt the strategic balance in favor of the Soviet Union. He writes that "intellectual honesty" would be better served if those who have adopted this position would say so.

The position to which Raymond Williams himself adheres is less explicitly pro-Soviet but only marginally different in political content. He proposes that the peace movement be directed to the "inseparable processes of weakening the imperialist offensive and strengthening the forces of socialism against those formations which now distort it." He suggests that the true potential of revolutionary socialism would blossom if the soil around it were more hospitable. He argues that the peace movement would be more likely to elicit real responses from the Soviet bloc if its socialist intent were stipulated.

Williams's views largely conform to what Thompson himself has written on the subject since 1956. They differ, however, on whether the peace movement should make its intention explicit. In other words, they differ on the issue of "intellectual honesty." I agree with Williams. The people of Western Europe should confront the disarmament question for what it really is—a question about whether they wish to tilt the balance of forces in favor of "revolutionary socialism," or whether they wish to remain free.

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Living without Health

Kevin G. Barnhurst

IT STARTED one morning in the spring of 1976. I was twenty-four, and with college and my ROTC active duty out of the way, I had landed my first job, doing economics research in Washington, D.C. I awoke that morning just as the numbers clicked to 6:00 on the digital clock. The room was dark. The windows had no blinds, and only half a sheer curtain hung from the far one.

I lay still for a long time, staring as the black form outside my window slowly turned gray in the gathering light, like a TV image obscured by snow. I tried to be matter-of-fact, as if totally absorbed in the form outside which took on a tinge of green and then the outline of leaves. I finally tried to wiggle my toes. I could tell from the movement of the sheet that I wasn't paralyzed, just numb. My hands could move too, but the right one wouldn't close at all, and the left only slightly.

I tried uncrossing my legs and moving my arms to my sides, and slowly sensation returned with a kind of electrical buzz. But my hands still wouldn't close or make a fist. I remember feeling calm—the way you do when dealing with something serious and permanent—and staring at the black, jointed fingers of the maple branch outside my window.

It was 7:15 when I covered my eyes with one arm, trying to escape, and fell into a dream of myself inside myself, kneeling inside the cavern of my own chest in what seemed like an ancient ritual. I watched the surface of my heart turn red and then come alive with a commercial of my life—like an animated poster for a musical comedy, showing familiar events in miniature around a central figure. The tiny characters moved faster and faster in brilliant color, repeating the words precisely as I had heard them in the scenes of my life but too loud, much too loud.

I awoke after nine and with difficulty dressed and drove into downtown Washington, D.C., to see a doctor. My hands still would not close.

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Some maladies are rich and precious and only to be acquired by the right of inheritance or purchased with gold.

—HAWTHORNE

IT IS now over six years later, in December 1982. A severe winter has already settled over Salt Lake City, where my family and my people are observing the celebration of birth and light and where Barney Clark is in the University of Utah Medical Center, tethered to life by a technological wonder. I cannot turn my mind from the suffering of this distant brother, who shares with me only the coincidental—we are both Utah boys who lost a parent in childhood, we were graduated from the same university, his name was my army nickname, and we both have been the objects of medical research.

But he and I are different, as father and son are different. My illness is uncommon, but its course has been ordinary; his is more common, but its course extraordinary. His mechanical heart is symbolic of his generation: through youth during economic collapse and young adulthood in global war, they witnessed America's rise to preeminence. In the span of their lives, childhood diseases have been conquered and the burdens of age eased. Poised as they were on the upward swing of history, they saw our national dream of progress become reality.

The mechanical heart pounding in Barney Clark's chest is one more proof of his generation's truths: America need not give in to disease, age, or infirmity. Good health, strength, and vigor are our manifest destiny, the product of our own ingenuity in a salubrious land, endowed with limitless resources and blessed of God. If we can put a man on the moon, we can cure our earthly ailments. From iron lungs to heart-lung machines, scientific research marches forward. My children will see the Jarvik 7 as my father's generation saw the Model T, and as we severed the chains of distance, we will loosen the bands of death.

These ideals were heralded once more in the December 14 *Wall Street Journal*. Barney Clark, the editorial said, "has opened new prospects to us in controlling our own lives." After reiterating our faith in technology and citing the ex-

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citement after the moon walk, the editorial said, "That same window on freedom is the thrill of the artificial heart." These ideas—that faith in education and personal responsibility, coupled with progress, would assure us good health—constitute the peculiar bequest of Barney Clark's generation: the American health ethic.

Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

—JOEL

I GREW up fearing the shots that prevented diseases my grandparents dreaded. When I first saw a hypodermic needle puncture my skin, I broke away and ran from the examining room with half the needle still in my shoulder. By the time I needed a booster, someone had invented a gun to shoot the serum beneath the skin without a needle. And for my last inoculation, I was marched through the school cafeteria and handed a small white cup containing two sugar cubes laced with a painless oral vaccine. That was scientific progress.

My generation was reared in the age of remedies. Doctors filled our TV screens, resolving a weekly medical "situation" with the aid of mood music and a laugh track. These TV cures paralleled our own experience: tonsillectomies ended our tonsillitis; antibiotics cleared our ear infections and our acne; braces straightened our teeth. Although parents and TV announcers extolled the wonders of modern medicine, these cures were ordinary to us, and doctors could call them up with a stroke of the pen on a prescription pad.

Disease was temporary and correctable. When relatives or neighbors came down with something unusual they searched out doctors with unpronounceable specialties. Those with unknown disorders went away to places like Walter Reed and the Mayo Clinic. At worst, they had to wait for a cure.

I recall waiting as a ten-year-old for more than an hour, stripped, as instructed, to my shorts and sitting in a cold cubicle. A shaft of light came in from the window high above the examining table. When I couldn't sit any longer, I walked around, afraid to touch the instruments or call a nurse. I climbed on the table but couldn't see out. Finally I returned to my chair, shivering. The shaft of light had moved and now illuminated the room's one adornment, a sign that said PATIENTS. It had a homonym I learned in school.

Mine was the impatient generation. With afterschool snacks, we were fed a constant diet of miraculous cures—itches relieved, headaches gone, colds vanquished. In sixty seconds or less we could watch the potions work, and then we could purchase them ourselves, over the counter. With all the patent medicines available in stores and at home, it was a shame—even a punishment—to go to the doctor. During one visit, after I got into poison oak, I was lectured. "It's your own fault," my parents said. "Try to stay well," said the doctor, as if I had not. The rash spread to places I couldn't reach to scratch, and the doctor's prescriptions took days to work. The only thing faster was prevention, and I had learned my lesson.

Preventive medicine is a sort of statistical snake oil, a concoction of equal parts of science and faith. It sets us in optimistic pursuit of the partly full water glass, ignoring the worthlessness of statistical predictions applied to the individual. It pats the well on the back for being well and puts responsibility for sickness on the sick. If we would stop smoking, we would avoid the threat of lung cancer. We face heart disease because we won't exercise or cut back on cholesterol. We could virtually banish disease if only we would end our lazy, gluttonous ways.

Like my peers, I took preventive medicine seriously. Jogging was shown to improve cardiovascular health; I took it up. The reduced disease rate and the general good health of predominantly Mormon communities in Utah was demonstrated statistically; I kept all my religion's dietary laws, fasting regularly, eating moderately.

The Mormon health code, called the Word of Wisdom, is specific not only in its prohibitions—no coffee, tea, cigarettes, or alcohol—but also in its promises: "And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings . . . shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones . . . and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (*Doctrine & Covenants* 89:18, 20). The first question Mormons ask of the sick is: "Did you get a blessing?" In spite of scriptural and pastoral pronouncements that not everyone who receives a blessing is necessarily "sealed up" to good health, the underlying question remains: do you have enough faith to be healed?

A simple cause-effect relation between matters of faith and health is not peculiar to Mormons. The charismatic and fundamentalist Christian religions are pervaded by the belief in recovery by faith. Catholics still make pilgrimages to Lourdes. Even the unchurched are possessed of a secular faith in some means to guard health and cure diseases—wonder drugs, health foods, Oriental treatments.

This eclecticism set in as faith in medical science and technology waned. Preventive medicine turned out to be about as reliable as its fellow oracular sciences, meteorology and economics. If the best science could do was to improve chances, then appeals to anecdotal evidence, to the testimonial, and to any authority could at least do no harm. My freshman class examined meditation; my grandmother grew herbs; a friend praised a new brown-rice diet; and I tried them all.

The nation's churches, schools, and families urged the health ethic on its children, putting at our disposal what we thought were the means to succeed at good health. My generation reached physical maturity without an inkling that there are human ills without remedy, that time could bring nothing but physical decline.

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Never tell people you are ill; never own it to yourself.

—BULWER-LYTTON

FOR six months, through the summer and fall of 1976, they said I had lupus erythematosus, the disease that killed Flannery O'Connor. When I tried to peel a cold orange, my hands turned blotchy purple, then cold white. Anything—air conditioning, anxiety, cold sodas—set off the same spasm in the capillaries of my hands and feet. Any part of my body elevated above my heart during sleep would go numb, so I slept flat on my back, legs straight, arms to my sides. When rest was impossible I began to write fictional accounts of my mother's death, hoping to be immortal in print.

Every other week I went into downtown Washington, D.C., to see a general practitioner—actually three GP's in a Health Maintenance Organization. The HMO was designed to preserve good health with check-ups and cure ordinary ailments with remedies created from what was on hand, and like my parents, it tried to avoid the expense of outside help. But my case was out of the ordinary. After telephoning a specialist, my doctors started me out on aspirin and began to monitor the emerging symptoms. When the aspirin made me dizzy and nauseated, they phoned the specialist again and then put me on the first of a string of anti-inflammatory drugs, all to no effect.

The pain around my joints increased, and lumps the size of BB's began to appear. I itched all over, and my scratching opened sores. But there wasn't much to do after each new drug was started except wait for test results. The rheumatoid factor was always elevated. Meanwhile—since HMO's were supposed to cut costs by giving well-care at a flat monthly fee—I got plenty of well-care: desensitization shots, antihistamines for my hay fever, paring for my corns, and the like. This assorted treatment didn't bother me. I assumed plenty of medical attention would make me well again.

But everything became difficult. I couldn't wash my car. A friend, trying to cheer me at church, shook my hand so firmly I was thrown to the ground. I couldn't hold hands, so I stopped dating. I couldn't sit or stand or do anything else for more than a few minutes at a time, and I was always exhausted. When I kept asking for a cure, the HMO threw in a couple of visits to the resident psychologist.

From my experience with the symptoms, I was convinced my physical disease was intricately tied to my mind and emotions. The doctors all dismissed my reports that changes in symptoms paralleled my changing moods. They said the variations occurred in my perception, not in reality. But the effects seemed real. I wanted to discover if something psychological, conscious or obscure, were creating the illness.

Dissatisfied with the HMO counseling, I asked to be referred out—to someone of my own faith. I didn't anticipate the reaction. After an angry exchange of letters with the HMO director, I was at last released to a traditional insurance program. To get coverage for visits to a psychologist, I first had to see a psychiatrist. I faced the visit with shame, never admitting it to my family, even though the psychiatrist I chose was Mormon. While I hoped he'd understand my dilemma, I feared he'd see the flaws in my faith.

His office, in the basement of his suburban Maryland home, was comfortable and his manner warm. I began to cry uncontrollably, and for forty minutes—until his next patient came—he listened calmly to my crying. Then he ushered me out. I couldn't stop. I got into my car and began driving aimlessly. People stared at me when I came to stop signs. For two hours I drove and cried.

We have all of us sufficient fortitude to bear the misfortune of others.

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

I DIDN'T know that lupus was the latest fad diagnosis among physicians. I didn't know physicians followed fads. I expected them, as healers, to deal with me whole. But to discover the cures we demand, medicine has relinquished much of its humane role in favor of applied scientific practice, and doctors have limited themselves to narrow specialties. Research and technology require the subdivision of medicine, in order to isolate small, testable phenomena and to identify specific remedies. As medical knowledge expands, the human body is reduced to a bundle of parts to match the medical bureaucracy—first floor podiatry, top floor psychiatry. What we desire, when the physician's hands touch our faces, is the ancient gesture of healing; what we get, and what the doctor perceives, is otolaryngological palpation.

My doctors were right, perception does affect our reality. Medical practitioners, for example, tend to play down or deny the pain they inflict on humans—pinching and poking us, pricking or puncturing us with needles and instruments. "This won't hurt," they say. "You'll just feel a little pressure."

Except for the terrain of our skins, we have only the vaguest sense of what our bodies are, of what they contain. Yet Barney Clark's life is now defined by a part that failed him. He sees the life-giving organ in his mind, but what do his doctors see? Dr. Robert K. Jarvik, who designed the artificial heart, gave a clue when, after Clark was returned to surgery to replace a broken valve, he commented on the *data* the operation would produce.

Most doctors share a distorted, comic view of the human body. Their jokes about intimate bodily processes, told matter-of-factly, are uni-

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formly crude and demeaning. Doctors may find release in their laughter, but what does it reveal about their perceptions of our bodies? When the question was raised by a group of Salt Lake writers, Jarvik told this story in great detail: at a gathering of friends someone commented that nobody ever saw Jarvik's body; thereupon, Jarvik stood, removed his clothes, and spent the rest of the evening naked. Only drinkers and doctors—whose perception is altered—could have done so, as Jarvik claimed he did, without blushing.

Is there no connection between the human heartbeat and the human emotion? If Barney Clark, his mechanical pump chugging a steady eighty-five times a minute, were to take his shopping-cart compressor to visit Mormon president and prophet Spencer W. Kimball, would he feel the same thrill other Mormons do? Would a simple adjustment—turning up the pumping rate—do the trick? Even if a racing heart is the product of explainable chemical processes in the brain and nervous system, is it not possible that the sum of this simple chemistry is greater than science can explain?

To view the human body as a mere specimen is to deny the common experience of mankind. The tangible expression of this peculiarly medical view can be observed in the design of doctors' offices and in the function of hospitals. The odors and echoes of these places lurk with the other horrors of the national unconscious and erupt in private nightmares and feature films, like the suspended victims and stockpiled cadavers of *Coma*. The fear of medical science is by itself sufficient motive for our urge to succeed at health, and the health ethic is, in part, its product: we hope for cures, and we dread them.

He's the best physician that knows the worthlessness of the most medicines.

—Benjamin Franklin

For six weeks, while the fall of 1976 turned to winter, I was told I had scleroderma—chronic and deforming but not fatal unless it attacks the internal organs. This was the diagnosis of a team of rheumatologists affiliated with a medical school in Washington, D.C.

After hearing about my symptoms from a colleague, the specialists took on my case for research and began the entire diagnostic process over again. To take advantage of my recent active duty, they had me file a claim with the Veterans' Administration, even though I was insured. They wrote prescription orders for experimental drugs from the VA pharmacy, drew blood at the VA hospital for tests run at the medical school, and compiled a bulging medical file while my claim slowly made its way through the VA.

The cold hospital laboratories and offices set off the color changes in my hands, so that the doctors could examine them and bring in colleagues, who would express surprise or nod, recognizing a phenomenon studied in books. Medical students, residents, and interns examined me en masse, and my symptoms were presented at a symposium. I did not have scleroderma, it was decided, but no one knew what I did have.

The research team again tried aspirin, the "drug of choice." Each week a flat-tipped needle was inserted in each arm to carry blood into two 50-cc plastic syringes, and each week I was weaker. When I insisted the bloodletting was excessive and the aspirin harmful, the researchers urged me to be more cooperative. Once, finding my report of the color and consistency of my stool implausible, the leader of the research team dismissed the testimony of my eyes with, "Patients are poor observers."

The researchers increased the aspirin dosage each time my strength declined. I began to lose my sense of time. I misplaced things. I couldn't fill out the forms anymore. Then in an interview the research team leader asked, "Do you take drugs?"

"Well, I take an antihistamine for hay fever."

"No, I mean *drugs*." He motioned to the veins inside his lower arm.

"Oh, *drugs*. I don't even drink coffee."

He was visibly perturbed. "Describe your sex life in the last month."

"That's easy, there wasn't any."

The doctor was skeptical. "Well, say in the last year or two."

"I've never had sexual relations."

Clearly annoyed, he explained that my test results were bizarre. Protein was precipitating into my bloodstream, and the analysis suggested I had hepatitis and a venereal disease found in the Philippines and in homosexual communities. If nothing improved by the end of that week, I was to be hospitalized for extensive tests.

These results were a blow that struck me like an accusation of sin. I left the hospital as I had come, knowing something was seriously wrong. I could tell without blood tests that I couldn't think clearly, that I felt dizzy and weak. While everything else had seemed to be failing, my blood had remained clean. "If I could just keep the use of my hands and my mind," I began to say to myself.

Four times a day I would arrange the four aspirin tablets, like razor blades or sleeping pills, on the counter. They didn't upset my stomach—I took them buffered and with food—but I dreaded them. I asked the research rheumatologists to change the medication, but they said I was being too subjective.

Then one night I began to have violent spasms in my back. Every movement, even traveling over the rough roads to the hospital, set off the convulsions. I was embarrassed at my loud, involuntary groaning. The emergency-room doctor joked that I was going through labor and delivery with nothing to show for it, and then he prescribed 40 milligrams of Valium a day—the highest dose com-

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monly given—and sent me back over the bumps of the Metro construction to the home of a friend, where I fainted while trying to get into bed.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

—MATTHEW

MY GENERATION has learned to ignore the escalating cost of medicine. In 1950, Americans spent $12.7 billion on health care, 5 percent of the gross national product; by 1980 the bill was $247.2 billion and almost 10 percent of the GNP. So it is easy to skip over the December 16 New York *Times* report that the National Institutes of Health have "invested" $161 million since 1964 to develop artificial hearts.

The implantation on December 2, 1982 is widely considered a milestone in history, and the Jarvik 7 is an object of national pride—proof that we live in the land of progress. In the history of medical technology, the implant's predecessor (iron lung, 1928) arrived midway in the decade that saw medical science become effective, with the discovery of insulin (1921), penicillin (1928), and sulfa drugs (c. 1932).

Medical discoveries through the 1950's benefited a large proportion of the public. Since its appearance in 1949, cortisone has overcome serious setbacks to become a wonder drug on the order of aspirin. I remember frolicking in the irrigation ditch after the Salk vaccine removed my fear of polio. That same year saw the first open-heart surgery. The artificial heart, unlike any previous advance in medical history, came primarily as a result of government intervention, and unlike the dimes we gave to fight polio, the public funds to develop the artificial heart were committed far from their sources.

Like my encounter with medical research, Barney Clark's treatment is being subsidized. Although we will never know its magnitude, somehow we must be persuaded to examine this and other medical bills. We are fooled by taxes and insurance into believing we don't pay. We do, and in ways we may not expect.

A normal labor and delivery costs more at the University of Utah Medical Center than at other hospitals in the region without research facilities. Unusual pathology tests are considered routine and justified as part of the hospital's "research mission." When the center bills for services never provided and for supplies never received, the patient is responsible for proving an error occurred.

Most patients ignore these charges and pass the bill on to insurance companies, and some insurers would rather pay for errors than challenge the hospitals. When money flows not from one human being with limited resources but from the seemingly endless supply of government and insurance companies, abuse is inevitable.

But physicians are not simply in a bilk-the-consumer scheme. They do keep us waiting and then dispense their cures without much explanation, but for one thing there isn't time to explain and still carry a patient load large enough to pay off the expenses of getting medical training and setting up a practice. Medical researchers are also on a treadmill, forever in need of more study cases and impressive results to keep the flow of money coming. One researcher in Boston says he pays the bills by running a small business whose product is a new contract or grant every year. The fame achieved by Jarvik—partly because the artificial heart is named for him—will help assure his funding and his position in the research community. By limiting their number and sending medical schools toward the receding horizon of technology, physicians have done only what our national health ethic has demanded.

We may sometimes complain about high doctor bills, but do we ever stop to count the millions wasted on patent medicines? How can we justify what individuals spend on balding alone? What government spends on any illness seems to be related inversely to the aggregate of pain it causes. No society can afford to cure everyone of every malady, but ours tries.

Ten years ago a National Heart and Lung Institute panel on ethics centered its attention not on whether the artificial heart should be implanted at all but on how to distribute the devices justly among the 17,000 to 50,000 potential recipients. Because each taxpayer contributes, each has a legitimate claim on the technology, but even at 1972 prices, installing all those pumps would have cost $1.25 billion. God and nature may not endow mankind with a right to health care, but the U.S. government will try.

The relative cost of many simple remedies has escalated because government intervened to build more hospitals than we need and to fund research not into the cures we need most but into the cures most attractive to science and research, cures with the star qualities of an artificial heart. The higher good is served when rare and costly cures are exposed to the rigors of a world of scarcity. To do so requires that we achieve a degree of contentment with a truth higher than our national health ethic: that we all must fail and die.

Health is not a condition of matter, but of mind.

—MARY BAKER EDDY

ON Valium my life was reduced to the essence. I was awakened when meals were brought, but I don't recall what, if anything, I ate. In a moment of determination, I called up every energy and by concentrating made it to and from the bathroom. But I can remember doing it only once. I also remember exerting the entire force of my will while being brought up to the living room and propped up on the sofa, but I was unable to hang on long enough to hear the carolers who had come to

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sing. I felt glad for these moments, but I was never lucid. As time passed, my periods of consciousness were fewer, and each time I had to work harder to become even partially aware. I felt no pain, but I was terrified each time I began to lapse back into unconsciousness. I could only start to cry before I sank again.

The return to consciousness produced the strangest emotions. I remember that my eyes opened, and I was awake suddenly, without effort. My friend was looking over me, and I felt a profound gratitude. As I was able to do ordinary things, I sensed the air around me, holding me, and I felt loved. I saw trees as I had in early childhood, like fellow beings. I felt a kinship with my house and with familiar surroundings.

After watching me decline, my friend had disobeyed the doctor's orders, taking me off the Valium and the aspirin. I ached and was stiff again, and I counted it a kindness. The chief rheumatologist did not appreciate being countermanded, and he instructed me to reinstate the aspirin regimen. I was reluctant so he left it up to me—I could take the medicine and receive the benefits of his scientific knowledge, or I could leave both behind.

That Sunday the sun poured through the colonial window panes of the Arlington Ward meetinghouse as I took part in the monthly fast and offering to feed the poor. Sitting on the hard pew, I shed my belief, in a moment of spiritual epiphany, that faith nurtures health, and I took in its place a belief that faith nurtures life, of which disease and death are part. I then resolved to take no more aspirin, because I knew from experience that it was harmful to me. In that moment, medicine was suddenly thrown into the glare of analysis and skepticism.

I was hopeful but not very confident, and I knew I still needed medical care. I called the hospital the next day, afraid to confess what I had done. Without saying hello the doctor asked if I had received his message, and his voice conveyed the urgency: "Get off the aspirin." He explained it was acting as a toxin, producing the disturbing blood results, the mental disorientation, and the muscle spasms.

The news liberated me. I began to contemplate a life not of health temporarily lost but of chronic illness. Continued full-time economics research was out of the question, so I decided to go back to Utah to study something with a part-time future. The rheumatologists first urged me to stay in Washington, then recommended I go to their colleagues at the University of Utah Medical Center, where research was advancing in diseases like mine. I wasn't interested.

When life is curtailed, we are left with symbols and gestures, and perhaps my return to Utah was symbolic. I was turning my back on cures, on the hope of good health, and on medical science as healing. I had seen enough of medical research to know that it could take over my life, and I was no longer interested in immediate relief, or a complete cure, or even a diagnosis. I wanted to live quietly, at a prudent distance from medicine, even if it meant suffering more or dying sooner.

Desperate diseases require desperate remedies.
—ENGLISH PROVERB

WHEN he signed the consent form just before surgery, Barney Clark is reported to have joked about backing out and the long faces it would produce. When he lapsed into semi-consciousness after suffering a series of seizures, his doctors prescribed a form of chicken soup and urged family members to touch him. His first words, when he returned to consciousness two weeks later, were whispered to bionics pioneer Willem Kolff: Don't quit. Don't give up.

The story of Barney Clark and his doctors illustrates every contradiction created by our national health ethic. There are no bad guys, no Superman, no kryptonite. The story is striking in its humanity. These weeks of extended life, even when measured only in Clark's moments of alertness, are a great gift, a miracle.

Humans are the only actors in this miracle play, even if they do get upstaged by one of the props. The human heart is the center of life, a literary, religious, and cultural symbol. What can be said of a man-made pump that expels blood by inflating eighty or ninety times a minute? It is ingenious and fascinating, but it is not greater than its plastic chambers, tubes, and compressor. It is a machine, not a miracle, notwithstanding the enthusiasm of the media.

A mechanical heart may be amazing, but it is also repulsive. We are drawn to it just as we stare at amputees and their artificial limbs and at the plastic facial inserts of cancer victims. These things awe and repel us because they hold out the hope of freedom and immortality while they remind us that we will die—and death will be painful.

All medicine has the same strange attraction. Like their Austrian forerunner, Mesmer, physicians can hold us in full sway, controlling our moods, nursing our fears and our hopes with silence. Consider the thousands now sitting in reception rooms, like the tormented waiting for Jesus to pass. Witness the sick gathering in California to wait on physicians doing research on interferon, the families making pilgrimages to Virginia for test-tube babies, the old sacrificing their savings on a trip to Mexico for Laetrile, and now the diseased filing suit in Utah for artificial hearts. Families sell their homes and travel from Maine to California to queue up for heart transplants at Stanford. Their lives become defined by their diseases, as if nothing else mattered. And who will blame them? If their bodies are objects only, they ought to fix or replace the defective components. If health is their right, they ought not be deterred from claiming it.

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Perhaps my imagination is too lively, but I believe that if Barney Clark were to live, for years let's say, he would come to revile the chugging shopping-cart compressor, regardless of his public statements. For Clark, connected to a machine, technical progress has become a necessity, rather than the vague hope it is for the rest of us. The December 16 New York *Times* editorial argued that artificial heart implants should have waited for progress on a portable unit. To prolong life without "reasonable quality," the *Times* said, is to succeed "only in prolonging death."

Clark's compressor came equipped with a key that allows him or his attendant to turn off the backup unit. This so-called suicide key is paradoxical. Life-support systems are the result of our efforts to bring our physical fate under the control of the human will, but once a machine is attached, the human will is subject, just as it is subject to the physical body. Our response is the popular notion expressed in the *Times*: that we have a right to a "reasonable quality" of life—a right to health—and that in the absence of health we have a right to choose death—a right to die.

These ideas, given currency by the right-to-death movement, fly in the face of ordinary experience. Life is its own imperative; it goes on without regard to quality; and death, prolonged or sudden, is part of living, too. We may have natural rights, but the right to health and the right to die are not among them.

Faced with capricious nature and our inclination to hope, we are hard pressed to resist the technological stop-gap. Even the benign Mormon view of death, as a passage home to waiting loved ones, is no defense. Was Barney Clark's decision an acquiescence in pressure from his doctors? A final lunge at celebrity? A response conditioned by his profession or his time? If he were to live long enough to write his memoirs (as the sick are inclined to do), I believe he would say that any life is worth living, even a life of chronic illness and pain, with its unpredictable setbacks. For me it is. Perhaps that faith is the miracle.

What happiness is there which is not purchased with more or less of pain?

—MARGARET OLIPHANT

IN DECEMBER 1976, I left Washington to go back to school in Utah. At Brigham Young University, I had student health insurance; so when a lump the size of a large marble grew in front of one ear, I was covered. The doctor said it was a lymph node (it wasn't), and he put off tests while he sent for my records. By the time the lump went away, the HMO, the medical school, and the VA hospital in Washington had replied that there were no medical files on me—no appointment records, no prescription numbers, no evidence of lab work, and no report of the symposium where my case was presented. The VA sent a standard form rejecting my claim and said the records upon which the decision was based had been lost. I was perfectly healthy, as far as anyone knew.

Rather than try to persuade the student clinic to keep me on the new drug my doctors in Washington had prescribed, I cut back on the dosage as my supply dwindled. Each reduction put me in bed for a week, so I timed it for a school holiday. Six months later I was completely weaned and feeling no worse. I was also a dropout.

I had requested that a six-hour test required for the master's degree be waived or altered. Sustained typing—even sitting that long—would set off spasms in my back, and stress would bring on spasms in my circulation. After I had completed the project and all the coursework for the degree, my request was denied. The department chairman stated that the exam was designed to induce stress—that the ability to withstand stress was a goal of education. As for my physical discomfort, he suggested I wait until I was sufficiently recovered to sit through the exam, as if I could will the disease into remission.

Out of school, I began looking for work. Interviews always went well until I mentioned my illness. A private firm and a federal agency withdrew job offers after personnel officers discovered their rules would not permit flexible working hours. When I decided to start my own business, I found the banks wary. To get a loan, I had to have a job. An official from the Small Business Administration told me that I couldn't get a disability loan for typesetting equipment unless I proved I was too disabled to use it.

I was also ineligible for group health insurance, and working as a part-time editor and freelance graphic designer, I couldn't afford the premiums for an individual policy. The lumps on my face came painlessly, one at a time, and left me, dizzy and fevered, a few weeks later. One doctor said it was cancer, but I was skeptical. Since I was forced to buy medical treatment myself, I shopped around and then analyzed each doctor's ideas. I was in no hurry. With time I was able to reduce my dependence on doctors by observing carefully the responses of my symptoms to changes they suggested in my life.

I learned to maintain a careful rhythm and variety in my activities, to allow for more rest and less physical exertion. I ate less. I learned to sleep intermittently for ten hours a day, and my slow range-of-motion stretching could hardly be called exercise. I learned to wear gloves and a hat from September to May, even though people stared. At other people's houses, I learned to ask for milk to clear my head and for hot water to warm my hands, usually at awkward moments. I learned to use nasal ointments, substitute saliva, and artificial tears.

Scientific evidence, doctors warned me, indicated that having a family would make the disease worse. Small children who are building im-

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munity—as well as large groups of people at church or other meetings—would endanger my immune-deficient system. I wanted to avoid taking needless risks, but I needed more than the life that the strictest caution would allow. I didn't want the disease to take over yet.

I chose to cut back my church attendance; I couldn't sit comfortably through a meeting anyway. Since my unpredictable health made me unreliable for regular church work, my reduced attendance raised questions. Had a loss of faith made me "inactive"?

I wore a lump on one side of my face for my wedding pictures and then fathered three children in four years, spacing them closely so they would expose me to contagion for fewer years. When each child came I became sicker under the added workload, but then my capacity gradually increased. After the second child arrived, I felt strong enough to tackle the six-hour exam and pass.

Of the three syndromes so far identified with my illness, two get worse when it's cold, one when it's hot; one gets worse when it's damp, another when it's dry. No climate can accommodate them all. When a job offer came from New Hampshire, one doctor warned against moving to New England, but the medical evidence was not clear-cut. After five years of learning to handle longer workdays, I felt ready to accept a teaching job.

A life with disease must be measured out, and I am stingy. Most people can't *see* anything wrong with me, and they find my behavior strange. Some act suspicious, as if I had joined the sickies and complainers in a plot to take advantage. Others become agitated with overconcern, disrupting ordinary social affairs with vague offers of help. Although medical history has recorded only three hundred cases like mine, everybody I meet seems to have heard of somebody who found a cure—drinking a solution of aloe jelly or Basic H, undergoing electric-current treatments while submerged, or something equally bizarre involving water. Some people put on a severe aspect, refusing to acknowledge my ill health. Others urge me to go on disability or become an activist, but I am not part of a minority. By middle age, we all have something—at thirty, as one acquaintance put it, the warranty runs out. Like health, disease can be a way of life, and it will be for most of us.

A sound mind in a sound body is a thing to be prayed for.

—JUVENAL

IT HAS BEEN six months since my last bout with my illness. The Utah summer was especially hot and dry, and even with all my ointments, drops, and humidifiers, I again came down with a sort of acute mumps. Within four hours the glands were swollen and hot and my face misshapen. The pain was like the sting citrus brings to the corners of the mouth, and like the pang that squeals audibly as air is forced into the cheek from blowing a balloon too hard. No, it was much worse—and sustained. Analgesics couldn't relieve the pressure, and the antibiotics that had worked the last time failed. The doctor tried stronger antibiotics with a broader spectrum and larger doses. Still in pain, I called in the bishop and cried and swore and asked him for a blessing.

The pain went on for a week. The doctor tried the strongest antibiotic he could find and started cortisone therapy—massive doses to start, then tapering off for six days. The form of the drug was new. Instead of a needle and syringe, someone had invented an oral cortisone—tiny oblong pills arranged neatly by daily dose in a bubble pack. The pain was gone in two days, the pressure in a week, but the leathery gland didn't go down for a month.

I don't mean to make much of my illness, but I am only thirty. At times I feel trapped, too tired to go on facing the constant discomfort and the unexpected reversals. At times I get angry, when I see that my family must do without, that I will always be a burden. Then I remember falling into a strange sleep, lying as I do on my back, like a corpse under the sheets. I was in a large, ornate room with a man I identified as a father and with others who were my peers. We were all aware that I was going to die. I was dressed in red robes that were heavy with decoration. The others wore blue and green. I fell down crying, afraid to die. "Please don't let it be painful," I said.

The others began to leave, as if I were already dead, but I managed somehow to stand again, steadying myself against the wall and trying to look defiant. The others were surprised. I then turned and saw my face reflected in a mirror. I was young. A momentary unconsciousness blinded me, and then I saw my face reflected again, like a mask, before it faded. I was gone—absorbed or vanished into featureless white—for how long I don't know.

I became aware, first of the warmth of my body, then of the stiffness from lying too long—on my right side, my arms crossed on my chest and my legs doubled. I felt my breathing and the dryness of my throat and mouth. I got up, saw my sleeping wife, and heard my son's murmuring. I felt no joy.

I still remember that interlude of oblivion, when discomfort was absent. But I'm not afraid of discomfort; I'm not afraid to live or to die. What frightens me is pain—I wish it weren't such a sure thing. But it is.

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Milosz: Poetry and Politics

Robert Alter

THE intellectual history of our century might almost be written as a study of what has been achieved by all the imaginative writers, philosophers, social theorists, and scholars violently uprooted from their homelands in Eastern and Central Europe and transplanted, as a rich and exotic new stock, in the West. Although some observers, like George Steiner, have been tempted to project a shared vision of "extraterritoriality" onto this extremely diverse group of intellectuals, their literary careers in exile have in fact been as various as their individual sensibilities and experience. Some have accommodated to the beguilements of their new surroundings all too well, like Jerzy Kosinski; others, like Vladimir Nabokov, have spun out of the remembered world before the deluge a luminous personal myth; still others, haunted by the past and its vistas of violence, have finally been unable to go on, like the remarkable German poet Paul Celan, who survived the slaughter of his fellow Jews in Bukovina only to take his own life in Paris twenty-five years after the war.

As a rule of thumb, displacement is probably hardest on poets, because of their intimate linguistic attachment to their native sphere, the ultimate untranslatability of what they do, and their consequent dependence on an audience in their own language. A good many modern poets have been forced to leave their homelands with little or no choice in the matter; a few others have, paradoxically, made the decision to leave in order to be faithful to their own calling as poets.

Such is the case of Czeslaw Milosz. Among the disparate writers in exile who have played an important role in the cultural history of our times, he stands out as at once a stubbornly peculiar figure and an exemplary one—peculiar in his unflagging adherence to what he himself has called "modes of eccentric vision," exemplary in what he has shown about the possibilities and responsibilities of poetry in an age of totalitarianism.

Milosz first became widely known in the West in 1953, two years after his defection from the Polish diplomatic service, with the publication (in both English and French translations) of *The Captive Mind*. That compact, quietly mordant volume, which begins with an account of the fate of truth under the Communist system and ends with a series of portraits of actual writers transformed or deformed by the new regime, is still one of the best general accounts of what totalitarianism does to intellectual life. Western readers of *The Captive Mind* in the 50's, or of its fictional companion piece published the same year, *The Seizure of Power*,* a somber novel of Poland at the end of World War II, would have had no way of knowing that the author was one of the leading Polish poets of his generation, or that there was an essential connection between his stance as a poet and his critique of totalitarianism. That connection was dramatically revealed by an unforeseen turn of history two years ago, during the heady days of Solidarity, when his poems became rallying points in the movement for new freedoms and when he himself was lionized on a brief return to Poland after three decades of expatriation.

Meanwhile, enough of Milosz's literary production had become available in English, even before he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1980, to give a fuller sense of what has impelled him as a writer. Poetry, however, remains at the center of his enterprise, and one must assume that readers of Polish have much more to draw on than the two suggestive but rather modest volumes that have appeared in English (most of the pieces collaboratively translated by the author), *Selected Poems* (1973) and *Bells in Winter* (1978). Two collections of Milosz's essays are now also available in English translation, *Emperor of the Earth: Modes of Eccentric Vision* (1978) and the newly published *Visions from San Francisco Bay*,† both of them philosophic or rather meditative in character, the former devoted to a series of idiosyncratic writers from Swedenborg to Simone Weil and the latter to reflections on the American landscape and the American condition. To these various probings into the surrounding world of culture and nature, one must add Milosz's remarkable autobiographical

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† Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 226 pp., $14.95.

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volume, *Native Realm* (1968), in some ways perhaps his most compelling prose work and certainly the one I would recommend to readers of *The Captive Mind* who are curious about the sources of its tough independence of spirit. Finally, Harvard University Press has just brought out Milosz's Norton lectures, *The Witness of Poetry,* which is both a poet's credo and a kind of supplement to his spiritual autobiography as an exiled Pole.*

MILOSZ was born into a Roman Catholic family in 1911 in a rural area of Lithuania and was educated in Vilna. Thus he grew up not in a simply demarcated national culture but in a complex interplay of languages, national memories and loyalties, and political power. Despite the fact that his own family was Polish-speaking, the first layer of national identification was Lithuanian, not Polish, and in *Native Realm* he devotes a long introductory section to an evocation of the past glories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and how they continue to affect the thinking of his compatriots. From childhood, then, he heard around him four languages—Polish, Lithuanian, Yiddish, and Russian. The last, of course, was the language of the resented conquerors, who in 1945 would return to impose a far more systematic and ruthless mode of occupation, annexing Lithuania and making Poland (from the late 30's Milosz had lived in Warsaw) a vassal state that reproduced the totalitarianism of its Soviet overlords.

Milosz's awareness of the dense Jewish population of pre-Nazi Lithuania would, as I shall try to indicate, also play a certain role in the evolution of his moral imagination. As one might suppose, he had ample models of anti-Semitism in the surrounding milieu, but once having almost succumbed to the temptation in a childhood incident he recounts in *Native Realm,* his attitude toward Jews has been marked by an unusual combination of decency and clarity, while certain aspects of the Jewish spiritual legacy and the Jewish historical predicament have contributed directly or obliquely to his own formation.

As a Lithuanian, Milosz's exposure to endemic violence did not begin in 1939 but at the very dawn of his conscious memory, in 1914: "My first awareness came with war. Peeping out from under my grandmother's cloak, I discovered horror: the bellow of cattle being driven off, the panic, the dust-laden air, the rumbling and flashing on a darkened horizon." The Germans had invaded Lithuania, and Milosz's family was soon traveling eastward with the retreating czarist armies because the father, an engineer, had been mobilized to build roads and bridges for the Russians. There followed six years of nomadic existence, living, as the mature Milosz recalls it, like an American pioneer family, out of a covered wagon, surrounded by constant dangers. The period of disruption was six years rather than four for these Lithuanians because the Great War was followed by an armed conflict between Russia and Poland from 1918 to 1920. Milosz's recorded memories of this whole period are sober, wry, understated—one of his great resources as a witness of horror is a kind of constitutional antipathy toward any kind of melodramatic flourish—and there is an almost Goya-like power in his evocation of some of the war scenes, as in this moment from a Polish retreat:

> The highway was a swarm of interlocking wagonshafts, eyes of the terrified horses, manes, mouths open in a scream, whips raised. Along the ditch by the side of the road, a soldier without cap or gun was slipping past, bareback astride a colt and lashing it with a switch. . . . In the middle of the street stood a huge tank, and my memory of this sight is so intense that I feel as if I could reach out and touch every rivet.

One consequence of having undergone such experiences in the first decade of his life is that Milosz entered the still greater cataclysm of 1939-45, to be followed by the imposition on Poland of what he calls the Imperium, with a certain ability to expect the worst and to stand apart skeptically from the intoxications of ideology and the blandishments of power. "Such a lack of stability," he observes at the beginning of his chapter on World War I in *Native Realm,* "the unconscious feeling that everything is temporary, . . . can be the reason for taking governments and political systems lightly." And he adds, in a comment that suggests one reason for his capacity of imaginative identification with the Jews, "History becomes fluid because it is equated with ceaseless wandering."

THIS presence of a certain "Jewish" theme in Milosz's biography deserves a little reflection. To some extent it is connected with his actual contact with Jews and, especially, as he reached maturity, with Jewish intellectuals. When his family settled in Vilna after the war, he discovered an intensely Catholic city where he would be given a thoroughly Catholic education, though one modern enough to admit the contradictory presence of evolutionary science in the curriculum. But he also became aware of Vilna as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" (he himself alludes to this designation proverbial among Jews), and as he came of age he encountered large numbers of young Jews entering into cultural and political life, often through what he viewed as a dismaying readiness to renounce their own heritage. By the time he reached the university, he also came to realize that the split between Left and Right in Poland was closely bound up with attitudes toward the Jews, the nationalist Right, of course, being associated in principle and in practical program

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with virulent anti-Semitism. Milosz's stance, then, toward Jews, from the imperiled minority of prewar Poland to the isolated Israel of the 1980's, has been a staunch defense of their fundamental rights as individuals and as a group.

What is more significant, however, for his imaginative relation to history is a repeated analogy of position to the Jewish one, an analogy of which he often seems quite conscious. I have already noted the life of "ceaseless wandering" that constituted his early formative years, and implicit in that condition was a sense of constant vulnerability, of being at once deeply rooted in a national identity and apart from the nations of the earth, without the secure moorings of a permanent place and power that could be taken for granted. At school, where Milosz continually sought to find a bridge between Catholicism and science while his classmates were happy to keep religion compartmentalized from the rest of their education, he was perceived for this reason as an odd type, a predicament he puts in the following terms: "My intensity won me the position among them of a Jew among *goyim*." Again, observing how traditional Poland was subject to occupation by a Russia professing a very different kind of Christianity, he insists on a parallel between Polish Catholicism, with which he still feels a strong connection, and Judaism: "Thus religion was turned into an institution for preserving national identity; in this respect, the Poles were like the Jews of the Roman empire. To make the analogy more complete, messianic currents were as popular with the Poles as they had been with Israel."

The deepest level, in any case, of Milosz's identification with the Jewish experience is in his abiding attachment to the Bible, which for him means not just the New Testament with the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New, but the Hebrew Scriptures as the articulation of a world view and a set of poetic visions that constitute the matrix of consciousness of the Jewish people and, in turn, of its Christian heirs. I hardly need to say that this makes him a rather untypical Catholic, both because of the very emphasis on an immediate engagement with the Bible and because of the forthright sense of it as the great document of the Jewish people. In describing his Catholic education, he draws a memorable portrait of the fervent priest who was his instructor in religion, and whom he compares with Naphta, the Jesuit polemicist in Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. In retrospect, he argues that the priest, in the rigid traditionalism of his Catholic views, missed a great opportunity by leaving the Hebrew Scriptures a closed book to his students:

> He could . . . have shown us that Judaism, contrary to its rival beliefs in antiquity, with their cyclical vision of the world, conceived of Creation in a dynamic way, as a dialogue, a perpetual upsurging of constantly modified questions and constantly modified answers, and that Christianity inherited this trait. Had he proceeded in this manner, he would have vaccinated us against the reality that things human not only are but become. To put it another way: he would have accustomed us to history.

Through whatever channels, literary or experiential, Milosz himself had already been vaccinated against history when the Nazi epoch of progressive mass murder overtook him in Warsaw in September 1939. During the six terrible years of the occupation, he worked as a writer and editor in the Polish underground press. He underwent, as witness and then as witness-participant, two great traumas—the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 and the lethal suppression of the Warsaw uprising in 1944. The latter was a collaborative effort of German thoroughness and Russian cynical calculation. The Red Army waited patiently just to the east of the city while Nazi tanks and guns pounded much of Warsaw and its inhabitants into rubble—waited, until it was certain that all armed elements of the non-Communist resistance had been "eliminated" so that the new Soviet order could be installed without obstacle. The new order quickly became a third major historical trauma in Milosz's life. These three grim events—the destruction of the ghetto, the destruction of the city, the corruption of the nation—have remained, I would suggest, focal points in Milosz's perception of history and in his understanding of the task of poetry under the pressures of history.

After the war, as a prominent poet loosely associated with the Left, he was accorded a privileged position under the new regime, serving as a diplomat first in Washington and then in Paris. But he was soon dismayed by the pervasive subversion of freedom of thought, belief, expression, and action under the Communists, and in 1951 he chose exile instead of complicity with oppression. For ten years he lived in Paris, continuing to write in Polish and finding outlets in translation. Since then he has been professor of Polish literature at Berkeley, an idiosyncratic and thoroughly unacademic figure within the academic community, pursuing his enterprise as a poet and essayist, and using his location on the rim of the ultimate West to ponder, as his latest book of essays makes evident, the abiding strangeness and rawness of America's relation to landscape and history.

I HAVE intimated that the strength of the critique of totalitarianism offered in *The Captive Mind* is fully perceived only when one understands the seriousness of its author's commitment to poetry. What could poetry have to do with a critique of totalitarianism? Milosz shrewdly observes at the beginning of *The Captive Mind* that in one crucial respect the totalitarianism of the Left has been more successful than the totalitarianism of the Right because, at least for intellectuals, it is powerfully seductive as well as oppressive. That is, both varieties of police state depend on the

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agency of fear, but the totalitarianism of the Right has little to *offer* beyond "collective warmth" and ad-hoc solutions to national problems, while its counterpart on the Left stirringly promises to solve all our dilemmas, collective and individual, with "a single system, a single language of ideas."

The language of ideas, then, and before that, language itself, are very much at stake in the kind of oppressive order established all across Eastern Europe in 1945, and in this regard poetry as Milosz conceives it might be relevant as an inward source of opposition. "Official language," one of the characters in *The Seizure of Power* reflects, feeling the weight of the new Communist bureaucracy, "deprived experience of reality." When, in the manipulated system of official language, what you yourself have seen and undergone can be made to seem unreal, you may be led to see, undergo, tolerate, perpetrate almost anything—hence the danger of that infinite plasticity of the human animal about which Milosz writes so effectively in *The Captive Mind.* Against this palpable danger, poetry is a way of using language that tightens our grasp on the reality of experience, whether the experience is joy or pain or something in between.

In this connection, one might note the political impetus in Milosz's latest literary project, a new Polish translation of the Psalms. The Psalms, of course, are not widely read in so Catholic a country, but Milosz, by going back both to a 19th-century version, on which he frequently draws, and to the original Hebrew, which he learned for the purpose, is able to make available to his now numerous Polish readers a kind of primary language of poetic and spiritual expression, entirely untainted by four decades of mind-numbing official jargon and its waste products in everyday speech.*

WHAT is the experience with which poetry might keep us in touch? Very much an East European in this regard, Milosz has a keen appreciation for the aesthetic sphere but a good deal of skepticism about a wholly autonomous realm of aesthetics, about aesthetics as an end in itself. In *The Captive Mind,* he observes in several different connections that daily life under the new order is drained of aesthetic stimulation: in place of the teeming variety of urban scenes that have excited the literary imagination ever since Balzac and Dickens, the Imperium proliferates bleakness and monotony in everything from the drab clothing and the ubiquitous painted slogans to the monumental ugliness of the new public buildings.

The point is not merely that the subjects of the Imperium are deprived of the pleasurable or recreational advantages of aesthetic stimulation in everyday life but that such deprivation is a prime symptom of the systematic extirpation of spontaneous feeling and personal perception. "How can one still the thought," Milosz asks rhetorically, "that aesthetic experiences rise out of something organic, and that the union of color and harmony with fear is as difficult to imagine as brilliant plumage on birds living in the northern tundras?" The simile of brilliant plumage might seem to imply a rather decorative notion of aesthetic experience, and Milosz is far from dismissing the sheer pleasure of reveling through art in sensory delight (a pleasure occasionally indulged in his own poetry), but in speaking of the inner contradiction between totalitarianism and the aesthetic realm, he has something else in mind. An earlier passage from *The Captive Mind* offers an odd and instructive illustration of the triple nexus by which aesthetic experience, poetry, and reality are tied together. It is very much the perception of a member of the resistance who survived the devastation of Warsaw:

> A man is lying under machine-gun fire on a street in an embattled city. He looks at the pavement and sees a very amusing sight: the cobblestones are standing upright like the quills of a porcupine. The bullets hitting against their edges displace and tilt them. Such moments in the consciousness of a man *judge* all poets and philosophers. . . . The vision of the cobblestones is unquestionably real, and poetry based on an equally *naked* experience could survive triumphantly that judgment day of man's illusions.

What may seem strange on first reading is the appearance of "a very amusing sight" in the midst of deadly battle and the leap from amusement to a rigorous judging of poet and philosopher (the man on his belly is imagined as a successful poet who now suddenly realizes that his poems are "diseased and highbrow"). The sight of the cobblestones as porcupine quills—it is, we should note, at once an immediate perception and already a metaphoric linking—is amusing because of the surprise of spontaneous observation and the sheer incongruity of what the observing eye catches under the threat of death. We generally live floundering in an endless tangle of clichés. The highbrow poet whom Milosz invokes makes poems, one assumes, out of other poems, juggling the most elaborate and sophisticated literary clichés in a kind of sleight-of-hand illusion of the expression of reality. On a much cruder level, totalitarianism systematizes the reign of cliché in dress, décor, architecture, social behavior, and, above all, in language. The last thing, of course, one would look for in a cliché is the unexpected, the incongruous. If a socialist freedom fighter is crawling over cobblestones raked by enemy machine guns, we must have no odd tilts of vision like the perception of porcupine quills, nothing that will detract from the stereotyped image of the dauntless soldier of progressive forces, nothing, in other words, that will wrench a general formula of ideological conviction into the concrete peculiarity—the nakedness, as Milosz says with italic emphasis—of individual experience.

* I am indebted to Regina Grol-Prokopczyk for her informed advice on the language of Milosz's translation.

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IT FOLLOWS from this sense of a rigorous self-judging poetry of reality that Milosz consciously sets his own enterprise apart from some of the main currents of modern poetry in the West. It is characteristic that he has devoted poems and essays to friendly polemics with writers like Robinson Jeffers and Henry Miller, to whom he is somehow attracted but who in his view have chosen a perilously wrong path. "The war years taught me," he observes toward the end of *The Captive Mind*, "that a man should never take a pen in his hands merely to communicate to others his own despair and defeat." The purveying of wasteland visions, he continues, at a moment when the literary imagination is called on to encompass historically concrete manifestations of abysmal destructiveness, easily becomes a "cheap commodity," and elsewhere he remarks that his fellow East Europeans could not be content with a literature that merely stirs sensations or merely confirms the essential meaninglessness of life. "They want bread, not hors d'oeuvres," he says sharply (and one might recall that Osip Mandelstam, a poet for whom he has expressed the deepest admiration, wrote in a memorable late poem that the people need poetry like bread, to keep them alive).

By the end of World War II, Milosz had come to consider his own poetry, as he puts it in *Native Realm*, "a kind of higher politics, an unpolitical politics." Sufficient weight should be placed on the unpolitical component of this formulation. He does not have in mind a Sartrean ideal of *littérature engagée* and certainly not a conservative notion of poetry as an ideological response of opposition to the regnant Communist ideology. He goes on to characterize his own verse as a fusion of "individual and historical elements . . . one seldom encounters in the West," and while it is hard to get hold of a single distinctive voice and style in his variegated poetic production—I am told this is also a problem for those who read him in Polish—that fusion is nevertheless repeatedly evident, especially in some of his strongest poems.

The historical elements are, first of all, the actual evocations of particular historical events Milosz witnessed, especially during the war years in Warsaw. More fundamental, I think, is his sense of history as a finely woven fabric where no thread, however ancient or exotic, is ever wholly lost as new patterns are added to the old. It is an idea he touches on at several points in *Native Realm* in explaining his native Lithuania and its relation to Russia. In *Visions from San Francisco Bay* he announces this involvement with the past as a defining principle of human freedom, mankind's means of escape from the rule of necessity, of senseless birth and decay: "We alone among living creatures have a history, we move in a gigantic labyrinth where the present and the past are interwoven." And at the end of *The Witness of Poetry*, he evokes what amounts to an eschatology of historical consciousness, seeing in the deep awareness of the past a hope for mankind's future.

Ideologies of the Left, of course, are impelled by their inner logic to eradicate the past, or at least any just and complex sense of it, while in his new American setting, Milosz finds himself in a world that, without explicit ideological motive, has in many respects torn itself away from the subtle integument of the past. An important part of his task as a poet, from the 1940's to the present, has been the imaginative enactment of a Catholic humanism, using the inherently recapitulative dynamic of the poetic medium to show how the present is profoundly caught up in the web of the past, how it needs the background of the past to be seen in proper depth. The opening lines of a poem called "Readings" are paradigmatic:

You asked me what is the good of reading the
    Gospels in Greek.
I answer that it is proper that we move our finger
Along letters more enduring than those carved
    in stone,
And that, slowly pronouncing each syllable,
We discover the true dignity of speech.
Compelled to be more attentive we shall think
    of that epoch
No more distant than yesterday, though the heads
    of Caesars
On coins are different today.

ALTHOUGH there are certainly modernist features in Milosz's verse—disjunctures, incongruities of imagery, enigmatic dream sequences—the prevailing mode of expression is traditional in its strong and explicit clarity (indeed, some poems may be a little too discursive) because of this powerful sense of historical continuity and because of his commitment to preserve "the true dignity of speech" in an age when language has been corrupted by the bureaucratic implementation of terror. A poem entitled "Dedication," written in Warsaw in 1945 and addressed to all the recent dead, gives a still more particular rationale for the attachment to a simple dignified style:

You whom I could not save,
Listen to me.
Try to understand this simple speech as I would
    be ashamed of another.
I swear, there is in me no wizardry of words.
I speak to you with silence like a cloud or tree.

In the same poem, three stanzas down, he offers what at first blush may seem an extravagantly unrealistic program for the function of poetry in a devastated world:

What is poetry which does not save
Nations or people?
A connivance with official lies,
A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut
    in a moment,
Readings for sophomore girls.
That I wanted good poetry without knowing it,

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That I discovered, late, its salutary aim,
In this and only this I find salvation.

Milosz is clearly not a man to use words like "save" and "salvation" lightly (in this instance, the translation of the original Polish text happens to be entirely his own), and it is worth pondering what, on the evidence of his poems, he might have envisaged in stating so far-reaching a goal for poetry.

The implicit model for an uncompromising poetry of spiritual truth that can save nations would seem to be the biblical prophets, and there are in fact certain prophetic and apocalyptic motifs in Milosz's verse. He is constantly aware, however, that it would be presumption for a modern poet to assume the prophetic mantle, and also that while some aspects of our reality are shown forth in the dark mirror of eschatology, there are also unresolvable discrepancies between the world as we see it and the world imaged in sacred text.

One impressive poem written in 1944, "A Song at the End of the World," turns entirely on this sense of tension between text and world. The end of days has surely come, the speaker argues (one could hardly ask for stronger evidence than the Third Reich), and bees are circling clover, fishermen are mending their nets in the sun, sparrows are playing in rainspouts. ". . . Those who expected lightning and thunder/ Are disappointed," and yet, the poem concludes, "There will be no other end of the world." Having both invoked and dismissed the traditional apocalypse, the poem hovers delicately over contradictory implications, which is perhaps the only adequate way to take in the true imponderability of the historical moment. On the one hand, the speaker implicitly impugns the complacency, the total failure of response, of the human and natural world to the advent of the final catastrophe. On the other hand, he suggests that the final catastrophe, whose comprehensive devastating sweep can scarcely be gainsaid, may not after all be final, for there is a manifest impulse of renewal in man and nature, an eternal reassertion of pastoral in the eye of the apocalypse.

One revealing move in Milosz's poetry is a quick glide from the public stance of prophet to the unassuming and at times wryly self-critical voice of the witness-survivor. These lines from a 1942 poem are exemplary:

I have seen the fall of states and the perdition of tribes,
the flight of kings and emperors, the power of tyrants.
I can say now, in this hour,
that I—am, while everything expires,
that it is better to be a live dog than a dead lion
as the Scripture says.

The shift in backgrounds of allusion here is beautifully apt. The first two lines, with their grandiloquence, their insistence on rendering modern terror in terms of antique tragedy or prophecy, are one version of the poet's hewing close to the timeless "dignity of speech." But this high style will clearly not do for the speaker who, in all honesty, has only the unadorned fact of his own minimal survival to show to the world, and so he invokes a sardonic verse from Ecclesiastes, that most skeptical and shrewdly unillusioned of all biblical books. Ecclesiastes, we might recall, is generally quite bleak without ever being entirely despairing: everything may seem an endless cycle of futility, but at least survival is promoted, at a couple of points the enjoyment of life is even made a positive value, and the book concludes on a note of affirmation.

I don't mean to extend this local allusion to Ecclesiastes too far into the definition of Milosz's imaginative world, but there is an instructive analogy here. He has not permitted himself grand affirmative gestures as a poet, which would inevitably seem false in the historical moment he addresses, but there is an implicit hopefulness—it is the very faith on which his Catholic humanism rests—even in the poems he wrote in great anguish at the nadir of recent history. Such poetry has at least a small role to play in the saving of nations because it avoids the poisoning "connivance with official lies" and manages to bear true witness to the terrible events, and at the same time it does not respond to those events with finally paralyzing emotions like self-pity, anarchic rage, or mere despair.

The traditionalism, then, of Milosz's view of poetry is not a reflex of aesthetic conservatism but flows from his sense of certain impelling responsibilities of poetry that make the freedom of the avant-garde look like callow self-indulgence. In *The Witness of Poetry*, he quotes a vehement attack by Simone Weil, written in 1941, on Dadaism and Surrealism, and then soberly notes that the scorn for democracy of these movements did, after all, have some link with the weakening of resistance against totalitarianism.

One remarkable illustration of this capacity of spiritually stalwart response is a haunting poem, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," which Milosz wrote in 1943 after having witnessed the final incineration of the Warsaw ghetto. The first two stanzas are a powerful evocation, through a catalogue of burnt remnants, of the devastation itself. The third stanza curiously introduces a "guardian mole" with a kind of miner's lamp on his head, poking about among the ashes and charred bodies. This quasi-mythic creature, it is clear, is a kind of archetypal representative of the Jewish people through the ages, somehow stubbornly managing to survive underground with its special wisdom and its peculiar spiritual authority, even when total annihilation has seemed to have overtaken it.

One might usefully juxtapose the guardian mole of this poem with that other odd animal image, the porcupine-quill cobblestones, for on the more com-

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plex scale of historical rather than visual perception this is also a sudden, almost whimsical, tilt of vision that enables us, as poetry can, to see things freshly, perhaps in their naked reality. Here are the concluding lines of the poem, in which, it should be noted, the hitherto impersonal witness finally switches into the first person singular:

I am afraid, so afraid of the guardian mole.
He has swollen eyelids, like a Patriarch
Who has sat much in the light of candles
Reading the great book of the species.
What will I tell him, I, a Jew of the New Testament,
Waiting two thousand years for the second coming of Jesus?
My broken body will deliver me to his sight
And he will count me among the helpers of death:
The uncircumcised.

This is, of course, in one respect an expression of guilt on the part of the Christian observer who has been spared victimhood and who cannot escape a certain historical complicity—at least in the eyes of the victims as he imagines them—with the murderers. The poem, however, holds in fluid suspension a complex of attitudes more interesting and potentially more sustaining than mere guilt. Three thousand years of history have not ended with this awful episode of genocide, and the suggestive implication of the poem's conclusion is that things, after all, go on, however ambiguously and precariously. The patriarchal underground survivor makes his way onward after the destruction by the red glow of his headlamp, a wary eye to the world around him, with a sense of dogged loyalty to his origins, a determination to continue. The Christian witness still awaits the Second Coming through this dark night of the Western soul, conscious that the very vision of redemption of the New Testament to which he clings is rooted in the Old, aware of the chasm that separates him from the Jew but also of a solidarity derived from a common spiritual heritage. One sees how Milosz's poetry can be an "unpolitical politics," how the rigorous ordering of language in the poetic medium can be an instrument for grasping a reality more complex than the reality of the senses, far deeper than the thin surface of ideological and literary clichés.

Milosz's verse is often strongly personal, but as one can see in "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," it is never altogether personal in the manner of the confessional poetry of postwar America because man as he imagines him is always connected by a fine capillary system to nation, creed, culture, and all the potent presences of the past preserved in the texts and symbolic systems of those large contexts of individual life. A poem entitled interrogatively "Ars Poetica?" observes this with great nicety, suggesting why poetry as Milosz has practiced it constitutes a principle of opposition to a political realm that fosters secretive privacy through fear and flattens speech into the iron frame of slogan:

The purpose of poetry is to remind us
how difficult it is to remain just one person,
for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors
and invisible guests come in and out at will.

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Still Life with Scar

A Story

Jacob Lampart

EVERY painter in Brooklyn was dying to win the competition. For the first time in its history, the Brooklyn Museum was opening its Great Hall to native Brooklyn artists under forty for an unprecedented three-month show that was scheduled to travel across the country to the cities of Boston, Washington, D.C., Columbus, Denver, Seattle, and Oakland, California. Not only would the show be the focus of national attention in major art journals and two weekly newsmagazines, but a $6,000 cash prize would be awarded to the twenty finalists and two paintings of each winner would be placed in the museum's permanent American collection.

Bernstein was no exception. But he was different. As his trembling hands caressed the crisp announcement on the post-office wall—flyers had been sent to every public and cultural institution in Brooklyn—his heart quivered. He was all aflutter, weak-kneed, happy. There was no doubt in his mind that he would win, and the work he'd been producing in his room, the style he'd been perfecting for the past twenty months, a revolutionary turn-around from his previous concepts, would finally be redeemed. He had been going mad with fear that his eighteen-year-old vow was coming to an end and his fortieth birthday would find him teaching rebellious pubescents in a junior high school somewhere. But the forces had come to his rescue. This one was for him. Alone. When it seemed that none of the clerks was looking in his direction, while his right hand browsed through the wanted posters, his left hand unglued the rules of the competition, which he innocently slipped into his pocket.

That Saturday breakfast was again a thrill. Like the old days when foundations offered grants and he could afford a leisurely meal now and then, he ordered home fries, two eggs lightly over, juice, toast, coffee—life for under a buck. Spread out in front of him was the *Times*, and his eyes concentrated on the arts section where galleries announced new shows and reviewers invented new *isms* to describe recent schisms. He no longer kept up with the uptown scene, preferring quiet walks in the Botanic Gardens just across the way from his rooms to the frantic forays on 57th Street alternating with the West Broadway glitter. Abstract expressionism, minimalism, conceptualism, it all boiled down to capitalism, his father, an old-time socialist used to say, and capitalism is really who-you-knowism. "Art is investment and people don't like to invest in strangers."

Bernstein wondered if his father could have been right all these years. No, he'd insisted, quality wins out.

"But in the meantime you got to live."

"Food, shelter, paint. What else do I need?"

"Forget I mentioned a wife, but something simple. Insurance, for example. Doctors' bills. You think you'll never get sick, but wait till your arm says you want to paint and your teeth say 'Fix me,' I give you one guess who's going to win."

His father sent monthly checks to the Workmen's Circle to make sure Bernstein's teeth got fixed. Bernstein, embarrassed, held out till the pain spread to other parts of his body. He swore off chocolate, but swallowed M & M's whole to avoid potential cavities, and liked to set up a plateful next to his easel, his one indulgence after years of living frugally.

The luncheonette was owned by two brothers, recent immigrants from Greece, and while the waiter-brother cleared away Bernstein's dishes he sustained conversations with three customers on less than a hundred words of English that he probably picked up in some poker game or between an American whore's hungry thighs, despite a cigarette dangling from his lips. Not to be outdone, the chef-brother chopped onions, diced carrots, and slit celery stalks with one hand and with the other cradled the phone and yelled at the top of his lungs in Greek. Next to them, Bernstein didn't stand a chance. He couldn't win with fists and he couldn't win with words. The brothers belonged on Flatbush Avenue as if it were a suburb of Athens.

Bernstein remembered sitting at this very table a year ago when he came across the article on the op-ed page of the *Times* bemoaning the sad state of Brooklyn, one of the forgotten cities of the world, and its overlooked artists working in rela-

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tive obscurity and almost total neglect because of the sentimental association of Brooklyn with incompetence. The author swore that Brooklyn possessed its own Rembrandts and Kandinskys, masters of color and form who, unless rescued from neglect, would die unnoticed only because when it came to producing slides or approaching a gallery, they were hopelessly naive.

True, true, Bernstein had muttered, aware that the author, a Brooklyn-born art historian teaching at Berkeley, was simply echoing what his father had always said. He means me.

FROM his windows on Eastern Parkway, the poor man's Fifth Avenue, Bernstein's gaze swept across half of Brooklyn, a vast stretch of painter's sky that humbled you with eruptions of Renaissance light. When he first moved to this apartment directly opposite the Brooklyn Museum—because it was a changing neighborhood the place had sat vacant for almost two months and he didn't even have to bribe the super—it was like a doorway into heaven where different layers of reality opened themselves up to him: a magical green sea of trees rising from the hearts of Prospect Park and the Botanic Gardens; then way in the distance, the red-bricked walls and black-tarred rooftops where the only signs of life were a chimney spewing gray belches of smoke or a pigeon lost from its flock; and directly in front of him, an immense palace of art with massive stone walls so huge it looked as if it could swallow and spit out any state capital in the United States. He felt it was a godsend, a sign that finally he would be able to paint in peace. But the constant reminder of his inability to do justice to even one sky on an ordinary gray Tuesday afternoon made him wonder if he might not be better off to live in a cellar and paint by candlelight.

The week of submissions kept Bernstein glued to his window. From nine in the morning till eight at night, instead of working on his own canvases, he kept his eye on pedestrian traffic moving along the tree-lined boulevard. He was searching for artists bearing their work. But by the afternoon of the first day, there was no need to search for them. They came by car, taxi, station wagon, bicycle, motorcycle, van, pick-up truck, but mostly they came by foot. At first, he tried to keep count, but it was useless. He had no idea, nor did he want to admit to himself, that one borough could possess so many painters.

His earlier mood of certain victory snapped. In a few days he'd have to crawl down the steps, bearing his own two choices, and compete with all the other "hidden talents" of Brooklyn. He began to dread the thought of losing. Desperate, he unpacked from storage three years of work, some fifty canvases, and spread them out along the walls in his studio, then his kitchen, then the bedroom, and finally even his bathroom. As he surveyed the fruit of his toil, his mood swung from glee to gloom. Mostly there was a sour aftertaste in the pit of his stomach.

He wanted to call one of his old teachers, Gordon the Terror, whose cool blue eyes saw the false note of every brush stroke, but his old legs wobbled, and without forty bucks for a round-trip taxi there was no way to get him to come to Brooklyn, just as there was no point for Bernstein to travel to Gordon's studio without slides of his work—something he was always telling himself to take care of.

After eight each night, when the vans and the trucks had driven home, Bernstein allowed himself to leave his station at the window. He paced his apartment like a caged panther, feeling his strength leaving him. Pushing away a canvas, he stared at his face in the mirror. He had heard that by the age of forty a man deserves the face he's chosen to wear, and what he wore didn't please him. He looked dour most of the time, a fear in the corners of his mouth; his teeth, never strong, had aged badly. His chin could have used some sharper lines, although he had never grown a beard to cover up its fragility. Most people assumed he always kept his head covered with a cap of one kind or another because he was bald, which was true, but not the truth. His relationships never went much beyond the removal of his hat, and because few women he met could surrender to a man who made love with his hat on, he was alone most nights preferring sporadic one-night stands to going through the story again of how a two-inch blue twist of a scar came to rest on his bald crown, and he would end up feeling numbed not by the bloody account of his second rite of passage at the age of three, which came in the form of a German officer's silver bullet splitting the red apple on his head, accompanied by an orchestra of Jewish prisoners playing the William Tell Overture, but by the pity and tears of the women held in awe which transformed desire into death. He preferred silence and secrecy. Even his closest friends knew nothing about the scar.

Bernstein, who kept his phone off the hook for hours at a time while working, hadn't spoken to a soul in days. His few remaining friends, Mel Lasker at the other end of Park Slope and Alan Korn nearer by on Atlantic Avenue, were no doubt scurrying about their own flats doing exactly what he was doing. He would have called them to help him to choose, but a paranoid fantasy warned him that they might do him in and pick the worst. There was Davidowitz who lived in Tribeca, which disqualified him from the Brooklyn competition, but he had broken off with him three years ago when his second one-man show featured nothing but models posing in the nude with tattooed numbers on their arms and barbed-wire jewelry hanging from their ear lobes. Bernstein, never a prude, called it obscene and opportunistic. But when he found out the numbers were actually Davidowitz's phone

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number, he threw the glass of wine he was drinking into Davidowitz's face and stormed out. They were not even on hissing terms.

LATE Thursday night the ringing phone startled Bernstein. He jumped over three canvases and a half-eaten can of sardines to pick it up, but when he heard his father's voice, his stomach dropped.

"How are you?" the elder Bernstein asked.

"I'm fine," the son said. "How should I be?"

"You should be whatever you want to be. All right? Don't say I didn't say it."

"Who said anything?"

"Not you," said the father. "Not me. I just thought I would call. I didn't want to disturb you all week. I figured you were busy." He paused. "You wouldn't believe how many painters there are in Brighton."

"You know?" said the son.

"Don't I live in Brooklyn? Isn't my son a painter? So why shouldn't I know?"

"So how many painters are there in Brighton?"

"Enough. But don't worry. I can feel you're worried. Do you want me to come over tomorrow?"

Ordinarily, whenever his father wanted to visit he gave him the same story—that he had an important appointment in the city. He didn't like it when his father, a man who wore his seventy-odd years well, a retired house painter who knew something about brushes, came to poke around Bernstein's apartment and to peek at his work. It killed the day and he found that he couldn't work for six hours before the meeting and at least three hours afterward. But tonight he decided that his father could help. Let him choose the best. The call was providence. After all, it was his father, and not his teachers, mentors, or colleagues who indirectly had led him toward his breakthrough.

"Don't come too late. Tomorrow's the deadline."

For the first time in a week Bernstein relaxed. Although the hour was late, he took out his easel, set up his brushes, shut off the lights, and lit a dozen candles at different levels so that the primitive light cast its glow over the entire stretch of canvas.

In representing the grain of a period when the only light on moonless nights came from candles, he discovered he was able to put himself into deeper touch with the period in question using the simple wax, flame, and wick alongside tempera and oil. The masters of previous generations, when tired of painting by sun or moon, had but one choice: the flame of a candle inside a deep cave or a secret attic.

Usually, Bernstein made his preliminary sketches directly from a photo, but tonight he allowed his mind to drift and his fingers to wander in whatever direction gravity pulled them toward.

Over the years, a virtual revolution had been taking place in Bernstein's work. Like hundreds of others schooled in the modern mode, Bernstein was a studio painter, determined to go inside of himself and find what he alone saw, a unique vision. His only compromise with the outside world came when, armed with a pad, he'd wander for hours in the Botanic Gardens searching for leaves with unusual designs, as intricate as the teeth in a set of keys. At home, he didn't render his discoveries until performing the ritual of tasting a fragment of the stem, chewing until the juice surfaced to his tongue. Only then could he begin the process of "magnification," his word for turning the veins and edges of a tiny leaf into a large abstraction, a struggle to give expression to the inner meaning of a breeze, the slightest movement in the leaves, even the shadows falling on it from the cigarette he held in his hand.

Refusing to inflict his vision of pure form and abstraction upon the world, he monastically chose to limit his gaze to a few trees, some shrubbery, a bit of sky, the beaks of birds, and occasionally, a brick wall facing his bathroom window in the rear. This was his world, but he could do bewitching things within its confines, and didn't hesitate to create twenty-one different shades of white in one cloud formation no wider than three fingernails on the canvas if he deemed it necessary. To Bernstein, paint lived. A successful painting not only had to look right, but had to smell right, even taste right. Bernstein's nose and tongue stopped at nothing, and when he was drunk he swooned over the differences between pastels and yellows, grays and greens, reds and whites, blues and purples, adding a little wine to the pigment he tasted and painted, painted and tasted, careful not to swallow a drop of his brew accidentally.

The sweeping change in his work came about as a result of desperation. Almost penniless, foundation grants exhausted, Bernstein, who had never worked in an office and wouldn't have known how to do anything except deliver pizza or paint empty apartments, was reduced to doing street portraits. His haunt was Brighton Beach, where the arrival of the Jews from Odessa had turned it into a honky-tonk boardwalk town eleven months a year. He considered street portraits little more than prostitution. For the price of a quick buck, he spat on his talent and spread his brushes for anyone who chose to sit down facing his easel.

ONE day the dapper gentleman in the blue suit and white-on-white shirt sitting in the chair turned out to be Bernstein's father. Surprised, he dropped a piece of pastel and before he could grab it, it had rolled between the gaps in the wooden boards and disappeared into the sand beneath the boardwalk.

"Nice weather," the father said. "A little cool, but the sun is warm. And it's so fresh here, a wonderful breeze, beautiful waves, the life, huh?"

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"We really don't have to meet like this," Bernstein said.

"I'm here on business," the father said. "Strictly business. Why should I take my trade elsewhere when I have a son in the business?"

"I can't do your picture."

"Why not? I have a face, don't I? I have a mouth, ears, lips? Can't you do for me what you do for everyone else?"

"No."

"Ten bucks."

"Please."

"Twenty. I don't care what. Straight portrait or a caricature. You do caricatures, don't you?"

Bernstein was quiet. "Whatever the customer wants," he finally said. "If that's what you want, that's what you'll get." Doing the portrait of his father forced the son to look for long minutes at a stretch into the face of his flesh and blood, but instead of a realistic portrayal, Bernstein took the innocent features of his father and dipped them into blood, ripping apart the eyes, bludgeoning the nose, piercing the skull, until the final portrait of what he'd created on his own easel was what he hated in others, an abstract expressionistic face with orange nose, green serpent hair, and violet lips.

"Not bad," the old man said, after a few minutes of assessing the results, "but wouldn't you say it looks like you more than me?"

Bernstein was taken aback. He stared at the eyes and wondered if his father might be right. Without realizing it, had he stumbled into a self-portrait?

"If it looks like me," he retorted, "that's because we probably look alike."

"I'll take it," his father said, and wrapped in the $20 bill he handed his son was a packet of photographs. "Here are some pictures. Faces of real people. Your own family. Relatives who were killed—by Hitler, by time, by Siberia. I'll give a hundred bucks for each picture you do, so there's no need for you to come to the beach unless you're here for a swim."

Without glancing at the photos, Bernstein said, "Look, I'm familiar with all the theories of the super-realists who paint directly from photos. It's really nothing more than another step in conceptual art, and I've always despised that too."

His father, well-read in the history of 20th-century painting, didn't want to argue theory. "An artist is an artist with his eyes, not with his mouth. Look before you talk."

"My mouth has nothing to do with it. I just don't buy what those *photographists* claim, that this form of realism adds a depth to seeing beyond what the eye usually sees by turning its energy inward—from life to photo and from photo to art."

"If you're insulted I mentioned a price, I'm sorry. But just take a look at these pictures."

"All right," Bernstein said with a shout, "I'll admit the effect can be brilliant, if they'll admit it's vicious, spiteful, and even, yes, even masturbatory."

"They admit. They sent me a letter and said that we admit we're vicious and spiteful. I have it in writing. Now will you take a look?"

Bernstein realized that he'd been raving. While his father went off to the knish stand to bring back some food, he began to browse through the dusty collection, struck immediately by the power of the human face in an era before movies, TV, and the 35-millimeter camera made it so common. Waiting for the first and perhaps only time in their lives in front of the black box of immortality, these black-and-white figures were somehow able to condense an entire lifetime into one snapshot, most probably, Bernstein reasoned, because they were forced to sit for sixty silent seconds without so much as a stir. Seventy years later, the world throbbing with color made these austere photos appear revelatory.

"Interesting," the painter said when his father returned.

"If you're hungry, eat," his father answered.

Bernstein, biting into potato, saw that he had been dead wrong about the super-realists. What he really should have been condemning was their focus—formica cafeteria counters, the reflections in a shiny Buick, a glass office tower—but the principle behind it was noble, even heroic: the artist making the choice to efface his own ego by a decision not to pollute the world with his abstract visions, but to use what was already available in the public domain, and yet make it new.

When Bernstein got back to his apartment that night, he wasted no time placing the photos next to his easel and then separating the tubes of color from his black-and-white tubes. The results were astonishing. On the one hand the image was the familiar icon of a previous century frozen in time. But something else in Bernstein's brush stroke clearly said that this was a modern composition. Perhaps it was the memory of similar photographs in family albums which created the painting's ghostly silence, as if these faces from the past were meant to be seen but never heard from again. Or perhaps what made it seem modern, ironically, was the use of black and white since the portraitists of previous centuries had explored every color in existence to capture the human face. Bernstein now became convinced that this concept of the black-and-white portrait could fix the break between the realm of the recognizable public world and the inner private realm of the artist, finally.

The competition didn't come a day too soon.

By the time Bernstein put away his brushes, the candles had melted and the flames had gone out. He sat in the dark, as if in a trance, staring at his shadow-painting. Across the way, the roof of the museum, where the statues of the seers from East and West—Sophocles, Pericles, Herodotus, Socrates, St. Peter, Isaiah, David, Moses, Lao-tse—kept vigil over the inhabi-

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tants of Brooklyn, was awash with its own source of light and some of it reflected down into Bernstein's apartment.

In a while the sky outside would begin to break. Then, when the dark purplish heaven gave way to a deep blue one, Bernstein could begin to discern a dim gray shape on the canvas. A two-inch scar on the top of the head trickled gray blood. The gaunt cheekbones swallowed any trace of flesh around it. But it was the eyes, staring vacantly into space and beyond time, that gave the painting its supernatural quality.

The cold empty eyes revealed the truth about the painting: this wasn't some spaced-out visionary in a state of high meditation, no, the man was simply dead and his eyes hadn't been closed, a corpse on a bed or a wooden box glimpsed directly from above.

Shock gave way to a thrill when Bernstein realized that he had taken his technique one step deeper into the mysteries of creation: instead of the resurrection on canvas of a subject long-since buried, he had turned the concept on its head—by actually painting a dead man whose soul had just left the body, he'd rescued the body from extinction, giving it life in a new form.

Right then and there he knew what he would be submitting in a few hours' time. The title came in a flash. He'd call it *Only the Dead Know Brooklyn*, after Wolfe's famous story. As for his second work, he arbitrarily chose the first painting he'd done in his black-and-white series.

Leaving a note for his father saying where he could be found, Bernstein left home early enough to be the first on line. When he walked through the doors, he exchanged his canvases, patches of paint still wet, for an application blank from a plain-looking woman with a drab brown dress and a Volunteer button pinned on it. Her knuckles were strong and her fingernails chipped, a sculptor's hands. Bernstein smiled generously.

"Social-security number?"

Bernstein's eyes danced. "Am I applying for a job?"

"It's an I.D. number we put on the back of every work we get."

There were three other volunteers checking applications.

"How's business?" the artist remarked.

"We expect at least a thousand today. Outside it looks like King Tut at the Met."

"The more the merrier," Bernstein meant it. "What's the point of winning if no one is competing?"

"I've heard that one before."

"Have a look. I don't mind. You see it coming and going."

"And so much of what I've seen, who knows what it was?"

Although Bernstein was usually more modest and let his work stew for weeks before anyone was allowed to sit in judgment, something in him craved for her reaction, a total stranger. "Please?"

"I just go to art school here. I'm in my second year."

"It's all right."

She looked at both paintings, giving equal time to each one.

While waiting, he filled in the rest of his application: name, address, birth date, education, brief biographical description (which he left blank), art materials, titles. The entire process hadn't taken more than three minutes, but she still hadn't said a word. He couldn't stand the suspense any longer.

"Well?"

"Nice."

Bernstein was respectfully silent. Maybe in a moment some comments would be forthcoming. When she remained quiet, he pressed, "Just nice?"

She offered nothing else.

"I see," he said. "All right, leave it at that. See you at the opening," he said with a wink.

He felt too good to let it slip away by the one-word comment of a second-year art student, and refused to allow the word "nice" to crush his spirit.

THE next month passed in a haze. Instead of painting, he took his first vacation in eighteen years by hanging out in the museum. He roamed from ancient Egypt to Mesopotamia to the North American tepees and huts of the Comanches and Navajos. His eyes seized on an object, the shape of a letter in the Ugaritic alphabet or the symbolic presentation of an eagle on a deerskin, and he stored it away in memory for later use.

He ate simple lunches of rice boiled with milk and seemed a slightly changed man to the neighbors in his building as he held open doors and brought up mail to some of the elderly on the fifth floor. Once, when he ran out of sugar, he rang his next-door neighbor's bell, but she wouldn't believe him when he said his name was Bernstein.

One day the weather turned violent with thunderstorms and lightning, and when Bernstein arrived at the museum, he was one of the only visitors, and it looked like the enormous building was his for the day. In the past, the forbidding sky was a spice to his pleasure as he savored every second of traipsing through his private domain, but now he felt it almost criminal that he was the sole person to walk in the palace. Rather than continue to linger there alone, he hurried out of the building and arrived home drenched to the bone. For three days he wore a scarf indoors, but he had no regrets for his impulsive dash against traffic in the chilling rain.

In any other city, Bernstein knew that the boulevard below his windows would be one of the hot-rent districts, cafés and boutiques springing up out of the cracks in the concrete. In the back of his mind he felt a bit sad that this Brooklyn—quiet, anonymous, humble—which gave a painter the years needed to master his craft, might be lost for good when the ravenous hordes descended and

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picked it clean, evicting the old-timers like discarded toothpicks.

Then, on a Tuesday in February, the phone rang. It was the museum.

"Is this Mr. Bernstein?"

The artist began to tremble. "Yes?"

"Can you get over sometime today?"

A roar went off in his head. "What is it? Did I win?"

"This afternoon will be fine, around three. Department of American Painting. Will you find it?"

"Yes! Yes!"

Bernstein could swear he'd detected excitement in her voice. Even before the phone was back in the cradle, Bernstein felt a sweet vibration in his body and a delicious fragrance in the room.

It probably was a blessing—a major exhibition, trips to cities across the country, money in his pocket. He sat down to catch his breath. Maybe it was true—fame was better than exile, success better than secrecy. The proof was that the hum in his body had turned into a volcanic energy erupting inside every fiber of his being with the power to heal his own wounds, except the pain in his heart, which had begun to throb suddenly.

He told himself, while clutching his breast, that it was simply the result of all the excitement. He drew a hot bath, sprinkled some bath oil which he'd once received as a gift, and for the next half-hour didn't move a muscle. When he emerged, he was a much calmer man. The dark room and the immersion in water released him from his vows. While bathing, he confessed his sins: obscurity in Brooklyn was a sham, a lie, a tough pose. The truth was that he'd always wanted to be as famous as Matisse, as elegant as Modigliani, as powerful as Braque. He wanted critics to visit his studio on Eastern Parkway and christen it the American Montparnasse.

This simple straightforward admission, after being locked inside for so long, brought Bernstein to tears. But it was a cruel twist of fate that the artist, who had never cried before, couldn't distinguish between the sweat of his eyes and the tears of his brow once the drops of liquid stopped flowing down his cheeks and came to rest just inside his lips.

For the next hour, sipping wine from a goat-skin flask, he walked around the Botanic Gardens begging forgiveness from the trees and the squirrels. His first love, a weeping hemlock, welcomed him with open arms. Outside, the tree looked like a small bush with tiered hedges, but creeping inside, he found himself in a private space, like a warrior's tent, low and carpeted, a protection from all the elements. Bernstein shared the last of his wine with the hemlock, and at a quarter to three, he brushed himself off and proceeded to his date with history.

USHERED into the offices of Twentieth-Century American Painting, Bernstein was quite taken with the simplicity of the wooden American furniture. He guessed Shaker, leftovers from the third floor: two rocking chairs, a rainbow-colored quilt on one wall, and even a spinning wheel. The desk, carved from narrow planks of oak, looked like a dining-room table. The only thing missing were bowls of oatmeal, and except for an incongruous Levine hanging near the quilt, Bernstein would have never known that he was standing in the control room of a major American collection.

When the eyes of the man sitting behind the desk met Bernstein's gaze, they snapped alive, specks of yellow in a gray fog. Not that much older than Bernstein, he seemed to have aged early in life. His hair, gray and grizzled, was clipped close to the cranium and he wore a navy-blue pin-stripe suit that fit like a glove, declaring the strength of his will or the skill of his tailor.

"You must be Mr. Bernstein," the curator said, pumping the painter's hand. "I'm William Robinson."

"I know. I've read your work on Hopper."

"Have you? That's wonderful. Please sit down."

Bernstein was shown where to sit and from that angle could see clear into the next room stacked ceiling-high with canvases.

"Well, so you're Mr. Bernstein," the curator repeated. "It's good to meet you. I like your handshake. Good and solid. Not slippery like a lot of these abstract expressionists or stiff like the minimalists. But solid like a realist. Here in Brooklyn we're into realism, neo-, super-, neon-, what have you, and when our show is finally hung, you're going to see realism make a big break into the 80's. Uptown they think this show will be some kind of mish-mash, do you know what that is? Sure you do, you're from Brooklyn. That's what we're going to do, put Brooklyn back on the map where it belongs and not some joke that every critic thrashes around when he chooses to consider ineptitude. Guts, flesh, and blood is what it's all about."

Bernstein couldn't understand why the curator was talking so much. Could it be nervous prattle? He wanted to get on with what he had come there for.

Instead, Mr. Robinson pulled out a pipe and stuffed the bowl with tobacco he kept in a leather pouch. He lit up and puffed, waiting for Bernstein to say something. The painter, however, kept silent, suspicious as to why the curator looked so puzzled, occasionally twisting his lips as if he were soothing the pain in his gums.

"Let me be up-front with you," he finally said, glancing at Bernstein's file. "I have some good news for you and, I'm afraid, bad news too."

So that's it. The truth comes home. He closed his eyes and tried to hide what felt like the beginning of tears. He saw the road behind him strewn with suicides and shadows and the road ahead adrift with losers and weepers.

"Frankly, you're a first-rate painter, your work definitely has the mystery and authority of what

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we're looking for. It sings, if I can use the metaphor."

Bernstein wasn't sure what this meant, but it had the effect of lifting the blackness from his heart. Maybe the bad news was just a gentle warning about the condition of his canvas, an accidental cat's claw or a flash fire which had ruined his work. Bad news, but this was life. Bernstein saw it as providence. If necessary, he'd rise to the occasion and, like a pro, recreate the conditions to reproduce the original.

"And the bad news?" Bernstein asked apprehensively.

"The bad news is that at some point an error was made in the screening process. But I want to stress that you are a first- . . . ."

"An error?" the painter's skin crawled. "What kind of error?"

"Of course you know the exhibit is for painters under forty."

"But I'm not forty yet."

"You will be."

"Won't everyone?"

"It's not easy for me tell you this, Mr. Bernstein. The screening committee should have never allowed your work to get up here as soon as they realized that your birthday, the 15th of March, would make you forty years old by the time the exhibit opens on March 21st. But somehow they made a mistake and your work ended up here anyhow. And before the error was discovered, your work passed all scrutiny. Indeed it was a unanimous decision. We just didn't want you to get some bureaucratic letter in the mail disqualifying you because of the question of age, we wanted. . . ."

"You mean I didn't win?"

Bernstein's body had left the earth. The trembling hands weren't his, and someone else's eyes were aflame.

The curator shook his head.

"But the day I applied I was under forty. Doesn't that count?"

"I'm afraid it's not enough."

"Yet the work was good?" Bernstein pressed.

The curator nodded.

"Then I'll get someone else to submit for me, someone under forty."

"I didn't hear that, Mr. Bernstein."

"Hear what? I can have a new application in an hour."

"I'm really sorry. But if you had any idea of the trouble we're having with submissions you'd understand. We had to borrow three full-time investigators from the Welfare Department to check the addresses that don't match up with the phone numbers. You wouldn't believe how many Manhattan artists tried to sneak in. Then we're being attacked by the Gray Panthers accusing us of discriminating against the old. Look, I'm over forty myself, but that's not the point. And every minority in Brooklyn wants proportional representation, as if art can be legislated. So what if I tell the Board of Directors you're doing important work, if they smell one infraction that violates the principles and by-laws of this competition, there's going to be hell. Let me be blunt, the funding of this show comes from a committee created to stress the vitality of the borough, its youth, and that Brooklyn is a living art capital, not some geriatric center where people paint part-time or when they retire from teaching or working in the post office."

BERNSTEIN was incensed, his eyes spat sparks. "I've been a full-time painter for almost twenty years. I never taught. I never post-officed. Tell me, who is a better symbol of Brooklyn than me?"

"I believe you, but there's nothing we can do about it. I honestly sympathize. And I don't say this to everyone, but I'm sure things will break for you one day. Perhaps another competition."

"Do I look like an idiot?" Bernstein asked. "There's only one museum in this borough and this is it."

"A man of talent doesn't depend on one museum."

"Look, I may never have another chance. If you think my work is worth something, then do something. Don't make me beg. Do anything. Push up the competition a few days. Call it a preview. Put together a small invitation list, a semi-private opening prior to the major opening."

"Aren't you stepping beyond your bounds?"

"This is my bounds, mister. Eastern Parkway is my street, Brooklyn is my borough. I'm not leaving till I get a straight answer."

Enraged, Bernstein couldn't think clearly and he didn't care that his threat might backfire. He felt like seizing the crystal ashtray where Mr. Robinson's pipe sat and flinging it at the grotesque Levine staring down from the walls.

"Mr. Bernstein," the curator said, "I'd hoped that you would accept our decision with the grace of an artist. Was I perhaps mistaken?"

Bernstein wasn't sure how it happened, but Robinson's question, uttered as if he were shooing away some fly that was threatening to land on his omelet, had a stunning effect on the painter's rage.

Mustering every ounce of will he possessed, he picked himself up and, without another word, turned toward the door. Just before he crossed the threshold, he stopped as if there was something he wanted to say but then changed his mind. His steps echoed down the long marble corridor, and because he felt like he'd just been devoured by a civilized cannibal in a dark blue suit and a white shirt, he didn't notice walking thirty steps behind him two plainclothes guards summoned to make sure he left the building without any further incident.

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Greatness & Decline of Richard Wagner

Samuel Lipman

EXACTLY one-half century ago Thomas Mann stepped to a podium at the University of Munich, and there delivered an address on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Richard Wagner. The next morning Mann left Germany for exile.

Mann's lecture on that celebratory occasion was the now famous "Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner." Since its initial delivery, which was almost immediately followed by repetition in Amsterdam, Brussels, and Paris, it has become firmly established as the brightest jewel in the Mann nonfiction canon. It appeared in April 1933 in the prestigious *Neue Rundschau*; it was published in German, alongside essays on Goethe and *Don Quixote*, in his 1935 *Leiden und Grösse der Meister* ("Sufferings and Greatness of the Masters"); in English translation, it has become a central part of both the hardback *Essays of Three Decades* and the softcover *Essays*.

Like all milestones in the writing of cultural history, Mann's creation was Janus-faced. It looked backward to an epoch of Wagner's hegemony, and it also looked forward to a future in which the workings of the *Zeitgeist*, at once aesthetic and political, would destroy that hegemony forever.

It is not difficult to justify the use of the word hegemony here. The first performances of the *Ring* in Bayreuth in 1876 and of *Parsifal* in 1882 were world events in a way that we today can scarcely comprehend. For royalty no less than for musicians, for millionaires as for intellectuals, Bayreuth was (*mutatis mutandis*, like Woodstock) the central manifestation of an entire cultural epoch. The most talented composers and musicians of Europe were happy to sit at the Master's feet; among their number was even to be found Wagner's father-in-law, Franz Liszt. To such a young aspirant as Gustav Mahler, a visit to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal* just five months after Wagner's death in 1883 was an event of life-consecrating magnitude: "When I came out of the *Festspielhaus*, completely spellbound," he said, "I understood that the greatest and most painful revelation had just been made to me, and that I would carry it with me unspoiled all my life."

Wagner had been wreaking similar carnage on the French. Baudelaire's declaration of loyalty even before the Paris *Tannhäuser* of 1861 was to be renewed by many subsequent enthusiasts—despite the humiliation suffered by the French (so welcomed by Wagner himself) in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Mallarmé was a worshipper at the shrine; the very name of a publication which had little to do with music but everything to do with symbolist aesthetics, the *Revue wagnérienne* (1885-88), showed in the plainest way the commanding position of Wagner in cultural life.

As for French musicians, Saint-Saëns, Gounod, and Chabrier were supporters. Saint-Saëns even managed to range himself on the side of the Wagnerians without giving up his Gallic objectivity: "*La Wagneromanie est un ridicule excusable; la Wagnerophobie est une maladie*" ("Wagnermania is an excusable absurdity; Wagnerphobia is a disease"). And according to a fellow composer, Vincent d'Indy, when Chabrier heard the first note of *Tristan* at Bayreuth, he began sobbing: "The person sitting next to him turned round to inquire whether he was feeling well, and our good Chabrier replied between two sobs: 'I know it's stupid, but I can't help it. . . . I've been waiting for ten years of my life for that *A* on the 'cellos. . . .'"

But Wagner's power in the last two decades of the 19th century transcended art—even an expanded definition of art. He had already played an important role during the 1860's in the politics of King Ludwig's Bavaria. He wrote voluminously—and was read widely—on subjects ranging from Germanness to Jewry, from the proper understanding of women to the proper treatment of animals. Wagner Societies were springing up all over Europe, started originally to help pay for Bayreuth; for their members the sacred texts were rather more Wagner's ideas than his musical notes.

Wagner had been a major influence on the young Nietzsche; this brilliant but unstable philosopher had written in eminently Wagnerian accents (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) of the "renovation and purification of the German spirit through the fire magic of music." For Wagner, of course, Nietzsche was a boy angel who soon fell. After they broke, his place in the pantheon of Wagnerian thinkers was to be taken, only a few years after the composer's death, by the more assiduous and dutiful Houston Stewart Chamberlain. That this sincerely German thinker was actually English only demonstrates the true scope of Wagner's cultural influence.

As we know from the recent study by Geoffrey Field,* Chamberlain (no relative of the famous Neville) was a convert before he had seen a single Wagner opera. When he finally did see one—*Rheingold* in the 1878 Munich *Ring* premiere—

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* *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain*, Columbia University Press, 1981.

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Chamberlain struck the proper note of transport ("truly an ocean in which man may blissfully immerse himself to gain learning"). And whatever reserve Chamberlain may initially have maintained on the seductive doctrines of Wagner vanished for good when he saw *Parsifal* —six times—in its first performances at Bayreuth:

> Hitherto, my life had been so artistically barren, but now I had reached the font of the purest Art. Schiller speaks of an "aesthetic culture which should combine the dignity and bliss of humanity": I have discovered the place of this culture.

Had Chamberlain done no more than live the rest of his life—he was to die in 1927—as a combination of fan and publicist, he would merely have been another melancholy example of a weak mind meeting its master. But Chamberlain's *magnum opus,* the infamous *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1889), with its echoes of Wagner's equally infamous pamphlet of 1850, *Das Judentum in der Musik* ("The Jews in Music"), became the principal inspiration of the anti-Semitic cultural doctrines of Nazism as expounded by Alfred Rosenberg.

At the same time as Wagner was a major political force, his literary influence remained strong. For example, there was Thomas Mann's use in short stories of *Tristan* and *Die Walküre* to suggest doomed and illicit passion. But Mann did more than appropriate the story lines and characteristic sounds of Wagner's operas; he actually used Wagner's *Leitmotiv* technique to achieve unity of tone and style over the long stretches of his great novels.

Marcel Proust too knew and felt his Wagner. It is difficult not to see a similarity between the remarkable use of the madeleine at the beginning of *Remembrance of Things Past* as the key to the narrator's world, and the famous E-flat-major chord at the opening of *Rheingold* as the very stuff out of which the world is made. And for Proust, as for so many other artists, *Tristan* was central ("And as the friend then examines a photograph which enables him to fix the likeness, so over Vinteuil's Sonata, I set up on the music-rack the score of *Tristan,* a selection which was being given that afternoon, as it happened, at the Lamoureux concert").

Meanwhile, of course, Wagner's sway continued to have its base among musicians. Certainly we would never have had Strauss's *Salome* (1904-05) and *Elektra* (1906-08)—not to mention the earlier tone poems *Death and Transfiguration* (1889) and *A Hero's Life* (1898) —without Wagner; indeed, Strauss could be called, to emphasize his descent from Wagner, "Richard the Second." Yet the compositional career even of such an avowed anti-Wagnerian as Claude Debussy is inconceivable without Wagner, not just as something to react against but even more as a model.

In this respect it is instructive to examine what may be considered Debussy's masterpiece, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893-1902). Reserved, restrained, implicit rather than explicit, making its points by elision and ellipsis rather than iterative demonstration, Debussy's opera self-consciously opposed itself in every way to the Wagnerian afflatus. But in running away from the cosmic tub-thumping of the *Ring,* Debussy only seemed to fall into the emotional stasis of *Parsifal.* As the English composer Robin Holloway has so convincingly shown,* the frequent parallels between *Pelléas* and *Parsifal* could only have been produced by Debussy's total immersion in the Wagnerian ethos, an immersion so complete, it would seem, as to explain and even demand its denial by Debussy.

While Debussy's debt to Wagner may still strike some as surprising, the same can hardly be said of the relation of the Second Viennese School—in particular Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg—to the master of Bayreuth. Schoenberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* (1899) is Wagner's *Tristan* with the words absorbed into the music. The *Gurrelieder* (1900-11) is also an unabashed Wagnerian epic in harmony, mood, ambition, and, one must also add, sentimentality.

Berg too nailed his colors to the Wagnerian mast, in his case by quoting *Tristan* in the *Largo desolato* of the *Lyric Suite* (1926), his first large work to make use of Schoenberg's twelve-tone procedure. But what, after all, was twelve-tone music in its inception but a codification, with diabolically strict rules, of the beginning of the *Tristan* Prelude, the very same music which, as we have already seen, reduced Chabrier to sobs?

As with all fructifying movements in art, Wagnerism showed its strength not just by the fervor and creativity of its adherents, but also by the distinction and enmity of its opponents. Like the adherents, the opponents came both from within and without music itself. Thus, in one of the great intellectual best-sellers of the 1890's, *Degeneration,* Max Nordau wrote:

> Richard Wagner is in himself alone charged with a greater abundance of degeneration than all the degenerates with whom we have hitherto become acquainted. The stigmata of this morbid condition are united in him in the most complete and most luxuriant development. He displays in the general constitution of his mind the persecution mania, megalomania, and mysticism; in his instincts vague philanthropy, anarchism, a craving for revolt and contradiction; in his writings all the signs of graphomania, namely, incoherence, fugitive ideation, and a tendency to idiotic punning, and, as the groundwork of his being, the characteristic emotionalism of a color at once erotic and religiously enthusiastic.

Nor was Wagner universally accepted as a musician. Even during the composer's lifetime, Eduard Hanslick had made much of his reputation as a major critic by setting the Viennese favorite Brahms against Wagner. By the 1920's, the very up-to-date Stravinsky, still fresh from his scandalous triumph in 1913 with *The Rite of Spring,* felt free to leer at the sainted Wagner. In 1924, for example, a Belgian interviewer quoted Stravinsky as saying:

> Wagner . . . is certainly not a real musician. He has had recourse to the theater at every moment in his career, and this remains an obstacle to his musical ideas, whose progress is hin-

* *Debussy and Wagner,* Eulenberg Books (London), 1979.

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dered by his philosophy. Every time Wagner was tempted by pure music, he was hit on the nose. . . .

Indeed, the course of musical composition during the period after World War I was not determined by just one school. To the leadership of Schoenberg was counterposed the school not just of Stravinsky but also of the French *les Six*. Darius Milhaud, one of the leaders of this group, was particularly anti-Wagner in his critical writings as well as in his iconoclastic music:

> When the Concerts Pasdeloup announced yet another Wagner Festival, I headed my article simply: "Down with Wagner!" which provoked a veritable scandal. I received protesting letters, insults, and even anonymous letters. Wagner was worshiped like the golden calf. And I hated his music with every day that passed, for it represented a type of art that I detested. . . .*

But such controversy, of course, is the very stuff of which artistic viability is made. If proof be needed of the vital and commanding presence of Wagner's works in the 1920's, it can be found in the high and flourishing condition of the performances he received in this period. To mention such singers as Lauritz Melchior, Lotte Lehmann, Frida Leider, and Friedrich Schorr, and such conductors as Karl Muck, Arturo Toscanini, Wilhelm Furtwängler, and Bruno Walter, is to evoke a golden age of which the phonograph remains today a poignant, if incomplete, witness.

PERHAPS the stage is now set for Thomas Mann's historic intervention on Wagner. Despite the massive political currents then swirling about Germany, Mann's presentation was ostensibly not about current politics at all; it was rather about Wagner's achievement and how it seemed to a German and European writer fifty years after the composer's death.

From the outset, Mann is at pains to separate Wagner from his political admirers of the Hitler period. He begins by linking the composer indissolubly to a past, and for some, a despised epoch—the 19th century "whose complete expression he is." Here is the hidden agenda of Mann's position: Wagner belongs to someone else than the Germans of 1933.

Accordingly, Mann stresses Wagner's parallels in 19th-century Europe: French Impressionism in painting, the English and French novel in literature. He finds a kinship in "spirit, aims, and methods" between Wagner and Zola. He notes in Wagner and Tolstoy a "common possession of social and ethical elements." He remarks on a likeness between Wagner and Ibsen, both "social-revolutionary in youth, in age paling into the ritual and the mythical."

If, for Mann, Wagner rises so high above all his operatic predecessors, it is because of his use of psychology and myth. Psychology, for Mann in 1933 as for us today, means the (Jewish) Freud—and Mann is quick to point out how Wagner's stress on physical love has "an unmistakable psychoanalytical character." And even in Wagner's use of myth, though Mann does not go so far as to mention it, is another link to Freud. For is not Siegfried's cruel treatment of his (grand)father Wotan in Act III of the opera *Siegfried* neatly explained along the lines of the Oedipus complex?

Mann, however, has little use for Wagner as an aesthetic philosopher: "What left me cold was—Wagner's theory. It is hard for me to believe that anyone ever took it seriously." Having rejected Wagner's view that a synthesis of all the arts (exemplified in his own operas) is superior to the component arts standing by themselves, Mann then casts doubt on Wagner's attitude toward these individual arts. He says Wagner was uninterested in the Italian plastic and graphic arts; though he revered poetry, his own was "not really written verse but, as it were, exhalations from the music. . . . in the nature of directions for a theatrical performance."

Even as a musician, Wagner is to Mann an incomplete creator. He sees the "ever-craving chromatics" of Isolde's so-called *Liebestod* as a "literary idea"; the opening of *Rheingold* with its famous 136-measure E-flat-major triad Mann calls an "acoustic idea." So curiously reserved is Mann toward Wagner even as a composer that it hardly seems a compliment when Mann calls him "a musician who can persuade even the unmusical to be musical."

Mann continues his attack on Wagner as a universal genius. Wagner, for some the very idea of the world seer, is for Mann only a special case of the artist, who "is not an absolutely serious man . . . effects and enjoyment are his stock-in-trade." In fact, says Mann, "Wagner's art *is* dilettantism, monumentalized and lifted into the sphere of genius by intelligence and his enormous will power."

Though Wagner is not for Mann a bourgeois—that loathsome creature hated by both far Right and far Left—he still has "the atmosphere of the bourgeoisie, the atmosphere of his century about him, as has Schopenhauer, the capitalist philosopher: the moral pessimism, the mood of decline set to music." As if tarring Wagner with the bourgeois brush were not enough in itself, Mann goes on to accuse him of carrying bourgeois taste to the point of degeneracy. At first he exculpates Wagner from the charge that in order to work he needed the stimulus of creature comforts; had not, Mann wonders, the noble Schiller needed even questionable stimuli in order to create? But Schiller was different: "In all Schiller's work there is no trace of the odor of decay which stimulated his brain, but who would deny that there is a suggestion of satin dressing gowns in Wagner's art?"

Moreover, Wagner is really more of a socialist—a dangerous charge indeed in the Germany of 1933—than a patriot, for, after all, there is no real folk music in Wagner, not even in *Die Meistersinger*. Indeed, Mann characterizes Wagner's Germanism as cosmopolitan at heart. And before he ends by discussing the true relevance of Wagner's work, Mann cannot resist one

* When I was studying with Darius Milhaud in California during the early 1950's, he told me (in connection with this story, which appears in his fascinating memoirs as I have quoted it above) that whenever he heard by mischance the music of Wagner in a concert, he always put on a recording of Mozart when he returned home, to "clean my ears."

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final dig at Wagner the Nazi hero: ". . . this bold musical pioneer, who in *Tristan* stands with one foot already upon atonal ground—today he would probably be called a cultural Bolshevist!"

What then is Wagner's true relevance? Simply, "Let us be content to reverence Wagner's works as a mighty and manifold phenomenon of German and Western culture, which will always act as the profoundest stimulus to art and knowledge."

Here, truly, we have witnessed Mann at his most subtle and complex. In the course of some 25,000 words he manages the not inconsiderable feat of being a totally committed Wagnerite while at the same time leaving not a stone of Wagner's reputation unturned.

To be sure, the great enemy of Wagner's reputation was not Mann but Hitler; Wagner's reign was ended not in the libraries and bookstores but on the battlefield. This having been said, it still would seem that Mann's intellectual labor of detaching Wagner from his reputation as a prophet and seer, and representing him as a "mere" artist, is the turning point in our perception of this master. For if the first fifty years after Wagner's death marked the summit of his aesthetic and socio-political centrality, the next fifty have marked Wagner's admission into the category of accepted—and safe—classics.

Not surprisingly, this full acceptance waited on the conclusion of World War II. As late as 1943, Virgil Thomson questioned Wagner's status on the highest level of musical masters. According to Thomson: "Unless there is unanimous acceptance of a man's work, which is rare, it is the people who don't like it that have the last word in its evaluation." In this category of the un-unanimously accepted, Thomson puts Wagner, along with other composers from Berlioz and Gluck to Milhaud and Copland. All these artists have detractors and thus, despite their fans, they continue to be special tastes in a way that marks them off from the universally approved Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Co.

But even in 1943 Thomson was on weak ground in refusing to allow Wagner into the musical pantheon. For the remarkable aspect of Wagner's fate during World War II—at least in America—was that he continued, despite the hatred of things German, to be performed. His operas remained staples at the Metropolitan in particular and in symphony concerts in general; new careers—like that of the great St. Louis dramatic soprano Helen Traubel—continued to be made in this music.

Once the war was over in 1945, all barriers to Wagner were quickly lifted. The pent-up demand for great music performed by authentic European artists exploded both in concerts and on recordings. Austria and Germany once again became places of musical pilgrimage. Chief among these holy spots was Bayreuth, where in 1951, still under the control of the Wagner family, his operas once again played to ecstatic audiences from all over the world.

No longer, however, were these works seen as being the particular property of a people, nation, party, or even philosophical and aesthetic school. In the eyes of Wagner's grandchildren, Wieland and Wolfgang, the operas were ecumenical, part of the common inheritance of mankind. Toward this end the *Ring*—surely the most influential production of the 1951 season—was presented as a non-specific myth, owing much to cultural anthropology and Jungian psychology, but nothing to any special race or culture. Much too was later accomplished for the wider acceptance of Wagner by the simple expedient of turning almost all the stage lights out, thereby rendering both the music's action and its ideas open to any interpretation the spectators wished to supply.

As to these interpretations, in general there have been two schools of thought since the war as to what Wagner means. Roughly put, they have been the Marxist-economic and the psychoanalytic.

The economic interpretation of Wagner has found its happiest employment in the *Ring*. Building on Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898), producers have used the story of the theft of the gold, and the subsequent attempts of various gods and monsters to control the destiny of the world through possession of the gold, as an allegory of capitalism in victory and defeat. On the stage this approach reached its apogee in the 1976 centennial production by Patrice Chéreau at Bayreuth. Here, in a stage conception which is finally being vouchsafed to the American public on PBS this season, one can find capitalists, factories, machines, and Wall Street. One can also see an extraordinary melange of styles and costumes, from baroque to mercantile. Sometimes the dominant atmosphere seems not that of a political allegory but of an artists' ball gone haywire.

Off the operatic stage, the economic approach to Wagner has been rather more inventive, if hardly as clear. Pride of place in this regard must be given to the work of Theodor Adorno, the renaissance man of socio-Marxist criticism. It is not easy to summarize someone whose unclarities extend to both factual statements and logical connections. But the following quotation gives the flavor of Adorno's point of view. For him, Wagner's operas

> provide eloquent evidence of the earlier phase of bourgeois decadence. . . . Wagner is not only the willing prophet and diligent lackey of imperialism and late-bourgeois terrorism. He also possesses the neurotic's ability to contemplate his own decadence and to transcend it in an image that can withstand that all-consuming gaze.

The psychoanalytic interpretation of Wagner, sub-species Jung, has been classically formulated by Robert Donington in his *Wagner's Ring and Its Symbols* (1963). On this view, the *Ring* is not about capitalism but about creation, birth and rebirth, the self, ritual marriage, destiny, and redemption.

It may appear churlish to pass summary judgment on such intelligent—and even overintelligent—attempts at explanation. Yet while past efforts in this line, ranging from the fevered reactions of Chabrier and the French to the poisonous politics of Chamberlain, have at least seemed to begin in an authen-

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tic response to Wagner's operas themselves, these more recent approaches strike one as artificial. For they seem to proceed from the author's own world view to the material provided by Wagner, instead of the other way around.

There is one crucial piece of evidence for this harsh verdict. Whatever the actual content of Wagner is now seen to be, his work is everywhere beloved and cherished. Not only does this mood of good feeling extend to the composer's work; it even seems to inform the relationships among contending schools of interpretation. Let a hundred flowers bloom; let a hundred schools of Wagnerian exegesis abound. Where everyone's right, no one's right. Or should it really be vice versa?

And so, in this spirit, we have arrived at the hundredth anniversary of Richard Wagner's death. The continuing flood of publications in both German and English is astounding. Picture books, learned studies of the composer's sketches, numerous new biographies cautiously and minutely going over the same material, all the detailed projects born of musico-literary minds—all these deserve mention, if only for their sublime pointlessness.

But what remains the simplest and most important point about Wagner today is just how badly he is being performed. The worldwide shortage of competent Wagnerian singers is public knowledge; in the case of male singers above the range of bass, the word shortage must be replaced by drought. The lack of conductors capable of bringing broad culture, sensitive musicality, and the requisite technical competence to this music is an open secret, only concealed from unsophisticated listeners by the sloth of music critics.

Last season, for example, America's greatest opera house was only capable of doing two operas, *Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, out of the four of the *Ring*. The Met must have known how poor the performances would be, for they were scheduled for the fall, well out of range of radio broadcast. But these performances were not just poor; they were embarrassing. Weak singing, lackluster conducting, shaky orchestral playing: the only question was why all this had been put on the stage in the first place.

Other Wagner operas fared almost as badly at the Met. *Tannhäuser* seemed to this listener unredeemed even by the signs Leonie Rysanek displayed of sympathy for the role of Elisabeth; once again the tenor lead was pitiable. *Parsifal*, although well received in the press, nevertheless provoked one critic to wonder whether the plush atmosphere of the Metropolitan Opera House was really congenial to this work.

We can, of course, always look to Bayreuth. Not only do we have its 1976 Chéreau production of the *Ring* to see on PBS; in addition, the musical segment of this production, conducted by Pierre Boulez, is separately available on Philips Records. Glossily packaged in a red, white, and black tote box, the records are accompanied by an equally glossy booklet carrying a long essay by Boulez. This essay, at once intelligent and revealing, may fairly be taken as Boulez's testament on Wagner, a full description of why an avant-garde and deeply French musician has chosen to spend a decade and more in the closest association with what might have been thought an uncongenial *métier*.

Boulez begins with the assumption that Wagner's stage works can be separated from the historical currents which accompanied their birth. It is music, not history, which Boulez finds at the heart of the *Ring*:

> . . . it is the music which is in fact entrusted with the structure of these mythological persons; it is the music which lends articulation to characters, gestures, and actions. The dramatic myth becomes effective by means of, through, and within the musical structure.

Wagner's themes, furthermore, "lead a life independent of the dramatic action"; finally "the musical structure becomes so rich and proliferous that it unites, indeed literally absorbs the stage characters. . . ."

Precisely because Boulez properly puts so much weight on Wagner's music, it comes as a particular disappointment to find on his records of the *Ring* so little of musical distinction. To begin with the vocal roles: other conductors than Boulez have a high opinion of Gwyneth Jones as Brünnhilde which seems impervious to her poor singing. A vocally pale Wotan, a callow Siegmund, an overextended Sieglinde, a barking Siegfried, shrieking Valkyries: it all makes one rather regret that opera must, alas, be sung.

But opera—especially opera of this musical greatness—can survive a good deal of bad singing. The poorer the singers, the better must be the conductor. Unhappy as one is to say this about a musician as intellectual and direct as Boulez, he conclusively demonstrates in these records that what seemed in 1976 (when he first led the *Ring* at Bayreuth) an absence of personal expression in the music is in fact a lack of any deeply rooted conception of how the music ought to go.

This is most obvious in the paucity, across the whole expanse of the four operas, of firmly held and firmly integrated tempos. It is well known that Wagner himself preached (not just for his own works) a doctrine of tempo flexibility, and indeed such flexibility is necessary for any idiomatic performance of his music. But Boulez carries this cautionary principle rather further:

> Wagner's motives, if they are presented at first in a definite tempo, at a definite speed, are never, or at least very seldom, bound to this specific tempo or speed. . . . It is just there that the novelty of his motives is to be found: not only are they not tied to any particular tempo, but they are also unattached to any preceding formal hierarchy.

The baleful results of this extended doctrine are everywhere on the Boulez records. The orchestra isn't together within itself; chords lack a discernible attack; and the articulation of basic rhythmic motives—as in the difficult dotted rhythm of the "Ride of the Valkyries"—is often indistinct where it is not actually incorrect. Time and again the singers and conductor are not together, and at important points of cadential arrival Boulez is so consistently ahead that the singers are reduced to a kind of involuntary *parlando*.

These faults are at their worst in

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the great set pieces of the *Ring*, the famous "bleeding chunks" which still figure in orchestral concerts. The closing scene of *Rheingold*, with its troubled hymn of Wotan to the as yet unlived-in Valhalla; Wotan's farewell to Brünnhilde, girt by flame to wait for Siegfried, at the end of *Walküre*; the Siegfried-Brünnhilde duet at the end of *Siegfried*; the great stretch of music running from Siegfried's funeral march through Brünnhilde's immolation, which closes *Götterdämmerung*: all these, in Boulez's performance, fail to be either moving or memorable.

HERE, then, is the paradox. Everywhere there is worship of Wagner: publications personal, commemorative, and scholarly; recordings, television programs for the masses, all the panoply of contemporary musical sainthood. Ideological friends and enemies meet in admiration of his greatness; musicians from ultra-modern to hidebound conservative vie to play his music. That classic status which so long eluded him is now his. At last, a century after his death, Wagner has finally come home to musical heaven.

Would he have thought the fruits of his elevation worth the battle? Would Richard Wagner, so fanatically desirous of being central to life on earth, have been satisfied with a permanent residence in the world everlasting? I haven't his answer, but I have my own, though perhaps it is the answer to a different question. With Wagner's canonization, we mark the final laying to rest of the 19th century in music, of the heroic age of music as we know it today. The best sign that we have done this is that even Wagner is no longer controversial.

And yet, like the glance of Freia which gleams through the Nibelung treasure and requires Wotan to give up the ring itself in order to cover it up, Wagner, in at least one spot on this earth, is still controversial. In the state of Israel there still are people who care about Wagner; indeed, they care so much that they won't let his music be played. Because for the Israelis, Wagner the man, Wagner the anti-Semite, is still alive, they take him seriously. Perhaps in so doing they pay him a compliment which we, with our easy acceptance (and forgiveness) of genius, no longer can. Thomas Mann might well have appreciated the irony. One can, as always, only wonder about Wagner.

Fiction

Anti-Americanism & Other Clichés

Joseph Epstein

IF STATISTICS are correct—and after all they don't always lie—the arts appear to be flourishing in America at present. Museum attendance has been up, concert halls are filled, over the past decade or so the ballet has come into its own, and there seems to be a revival of interest in the movies. The only art which does not seem to be looking up, up, up is literature. By literature I mean of course serious literature—writing which, while seeking to entertain, seeks to do more than that alone. My sense of the matter is that serious people seem more and more to have turned away from serious writing.

This is, of course, a difficult point to prove. Arguing against it is the fact that novelists in our day have become celebrity figures. Creative writing courses—in fiction and in poetry—have now become a staple of university and adult education. Then, too, so many people do buy books and many nearly unreadable books of putatively serious intent do seem to sell very well. Whenever I acquire a paperback version of a contemporary novel, it seems inevitably to bear the claim, "Sixteen Weeks on the New York *Times* Best-Seller List." Perhaps in the seventeenth week they pulp it.

But whatever the celebrity of novelists, however wide the spread of writing as an aspiration or a hobby, whatever the numbers of people buying supposedly serious books, I retain the sense that literature means less to people than it once did. Again, this is not a point that admits of easy proof—or perhaps even of proof at all. But I notice that I never hear people argue strongly about the quality of novels, or declare that they love a

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particular novelist or poet, or announce that a recent collection of poems or a new novel has greatly moved them. If you don't believe this, ask yourself what novel by a contemporary American writer you are much looking forward to. Or—a tougher question still—ask yourself if over the past five years you have bought a book by a contemporary poet.

ALL of which is a roundabout way of saying that something odd has happened in American literary culture in recent years. Although a literary culture often thrives in the midst of political power—witness the long hegemony around the world of English literature—suddenly American literature, contemporary American literature, seems rather backwater, a bit beside the point, somehow or other less than first-rate, even though American political power is still great. Why?

Not long ago Saul Bellow, in an interview, said that he thought American writers no longer had the great subject. The great subpect of our day, he said, belonged to those writers who had survived totalitarian regimes and lived to write about it: Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, Sinyavsky, Kundera. Bellow was not saying anything as foolish as C. P. Snow said a few years ago, when he remarked that at least in the Soviet Union they took writers and their ideas seriously, the proof being that a writer there could get killed for his ideas. What Bellow seemed to be saying was that these writers, often wretched in the conditions of their lives, were nonetheless privileged as writers in their experience, for their experience had brought them face to face with terror and evil, goodness and heroism—in short, with the largest human feelings and with destiny played out on the grand scale.

For contemporary American writers the job of literature was more complicated, or so Bellow thought. They had to come at things less directly, more obliquely, with comedy and irony being perhaps their chief literary weapons. This is, of course, a description of the way Saul Bellow himself proceeds. But at an even slightly lower level than Bellow is able to work it, this vein of writing, relying so heavily on irony and comedy, quickly becomes desiccated and dreary in the extreme. In its academicized versions—in the recent books of such writers as John Barth, John Hawkes, William Gass, and worse—it becomes a kind of English department amusement, though even in English departments such novelists are scarcely everyone's notion of a good time.

Bellow's is a provocative and in many ways a troubling point. Next to the largeness of a Solzhenitsyn, the depth of a Sinyavsky, even quite good American writers—John Cheever, say, or Robert Lowell, to name only the recently deceased—seem, as literary men, rather self-absorbed and shrunken. Now I do not wish to put down such writers as John Cheever and Robert Lowell, whose dedication to their craft was considerable and whose achievements were won against real obstacles. But somehow, at this moment, it is the writers who are able to connect their work with history who seem the most impressive. I think here of a writer like V. S. Naipaul, whose great subject is the Third World on its collision course; or even of Gabriel García Márquez, a writer in whose politics I find nothing to admire but whose attempt to reconstruct the history of Colombia in his fiction has stirred deep interest.

There can be little doubt about it: writing with the wind of history at his back lends a writer's work a sense of urgency, even sometimes a feeling of grandeur. It is this sense of urgency, this feeling of grandeur, that is currently missing from contemporary American writing.

Not all American writers would agree. A large number, after all, feel that they *are* writing with the wind of history at their backs. Yet most of these are writers whose position vis-à-vis their own country turns out to be an adversary one. They write as if they were living in a hostile environment, surrounded by the enemy. Usually they are writers with a heightened, even feverish, sense of self-drama. Their characteristic tone is struck in the following remark made not long ago by Norman Mailer: "I used to hate America for what it was doing to all of us. Now I hate all of us for what we're doing to America." We? The late George P. Elliott once wrote an essay entitled, "Who Is We?" It is a bit tricky to know for certain who the *we* is in Norman Mailer's condemnation, but I feel fairly certain *we* is not meant to include Mailer himself.

TO THINK the worst of one's own country—against a superabundance of evidence to the contrary—gives the self-dramatizing American literary imagination a background against which to dramatize itself. The contemporary literary scene is rife with writers whose chief stock in the trade of ideas is a crude anti-Americanism. Where history does not provide the wind at their backs, they supply their own hot air. To take a tag line from the most recent book by the editor of the *Nation*, let me name some names:

There is, to begin with, Robert Coover, the culminating moment in whose last novel, *A Public Burning*, is the buggery of Richard Nixon by, of all people, a character called Uncle Sam. There is Robert Stone, a richly talented writer but one whose reigning idea, expressed in each of his three novels, is that, with all the evils loose in the world, none surpasses that of American innocence, which, as Stone puts it in the first of his novels, *A Hall of Mirrors*, is "so vast and awesome that the entire world will be reduced by it." There is Joseph Heller, whose idea of moral courage in his last novel, *Good as Gold*, is to attack Henry Kissinger behind the screen of fiction; and to whose earlier book, *Catch-22*, Evelyn Waugh, when sent a copy in the hope of obtaining a blurb, responded: "You may quote me as saying: 'This exposure of corruption, cowardice, and incivility of American officers will outrage all friends of your country (such as myself) and greatly comfort your enemies.'" And then there is E. L. Doctorow, whose novels feature what he takes to be the coarseness, indeed the barbarity, of life in the capitalist United

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States and who, in an article on George Orwell, recently wrote:

> We and the Soviets have actually created an unholy alliance, a gargantuan intimacy, in which, by now, our ideological differences are less important than the fact that we think the same thoughts, mirror each other's responses, heft the same bombs, and take turns committing crimes and deploring them, in some sort of alternating current of outrage and despair, outrage and despair, that has with smoke and sulphur generated an ectoplasmic gel of objective reality along the lines of Orwell's tortured vision.

It somehow seems important to point out that Doctorow's comments on the similarities shared by the Soviet Union and the United States appear in a recent issue of *Playboy*. The Soviet Union and the United States have in common none of the similarities Doctorow points to, but one similarity, I suspect, they might share—and this is that, in either of the two countries E. L. Doctorow, whose specialty is telling his readers what they wish to hear, would likely be a success. A dacha on the Vineyard, a dacha on the Black Sea.

Literary anti-Americanism exists on another, perhaps a lesser, level, in works in which America is portrayed not as the sole cause of the world's horrors but a serious affliction nonetheless for those compelled to live in it. In the stories and novels of Ann Beattie there is always time to direct a little kick at Richard Nixon or make a sneering reference to the Pentagon. In the work of Jill Robinson America is depicted as emptily grotesque; everyone is an alcoholic, or on pills or cocaine, and children are suffering for want of good solid values. In John Updike's novels the American middle class can always rely on a good drubbing, and in as recent a novel as *Rabbit Is Rich* Updike chronicles what he takes to be the United States in decline but without being terribly convincing that he much cares. One becomes used to this sort of thing from American writers, so used to it that one does not even blink when the novelist Stanley Elkin, at a dinner party given for him by his publisher for winning a literary prize, says of Disneyland (as reported in *Publishers Weekly*), "I did not like it at all. It was just like Auschwitz or Dachau. They put you in these little electric carts and trundle you around."

The list of politically tendentious novelists, of political intrusions in novels that pretend to be above politics, and of flat-out politically fatuous remarks by novelists could be greatly extended. Stendhal once likened the introduction of politics in a novel to a pistol shot at the opera. But in the work of the writers I have mentioned the introduction of politics is more like a belch at the buffet: misplaced, gross, indecent. What unites these writers, in my view, is that not only do they not think well of their country but they do not seem to take much joy in life altogether. Coover, Stone, Heller, Doctorow, Beattie, Updike, and the rest are either angry, or soured, or depressed, or outraged, or filled with yearning, but of none of them can one say with any confidence that he is on the side of life. And since life somehow seems to have let these writers down, perhaps it is not so surprising that they should also feel that their country has let them down, too.

THE opinion these writers hold of their country is not something that they can be argued out of. I am not even certain that it is the responsibility of a writer to love his country, though in complicated ways the best writers from Dickens through Tolstoy through Henry James to James Joyce have always done so. No, all that can be asked of these writers is that they knock off the clichés. For all the views and visions and opinions I have quoted and enumerated are solid mahogany clichés—tried and tested and found perfectly untrue.

Clichés, like ideas, have consequences. And this particular set of clichés has not only helped to lay waste a good deal of literary talent but in ways direct and indirect has drained much of the prestige that the literary mind not so long ago held in this country. Yet the real crime in these clichés is against literature itself. They are a violation of the ideal of fidelity to the complexity of experience that has always been literature's special claim on the attention of educated people. I think that this kind of complexity is simply not available to writers who really believe that Richard Nixon is a monster in the class of Hitler and Stalin, that what is truly wrong with the world today is multinational corporations, and that America in its essential character is no different from the Soviet Union. If you can compare Disneyland to Dachau or Auschwitz, I don't think you are in a position to report what life is like in this or any other country.

William Dean Howells, in the middle of an essay on Dostoevsky, once suggested that American writers do best "to emphasize the smiling aspects of life"—for which suggestion, to adopt a homey phrase, Howells caught his critical lunch. I am not here suggesting anything of the kind. Nor am I asking that our writers produce politically correct literature; that is to say, literature whose political opinions reflect my own. The relationship between politics and literature is always a delicate, always a tricky, one. In any negotiation between the two, though, literature must retain a firm upper hand. It seems to me possible, for example, to admire both André Malraux's *La condition humaine*, which extols the revolutionary personality, and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, which deplores the evil that is the reverse side of the coin of revolutionary idealism. One can admire both novels because in both of them literature has the upper hand, and in both the writer's allegiance is not to hating his country or to gaining "justice for the Rosenbergs," but to the ideal of fidelity to the complexity of experience.

"LITERATURE, as usual, lingers behind change," wrote Desmond MacCarthy. And, I would add, the university, as usual, lingers behind literature. The effect of the clichés I have been discussing on the university teaching of literature is one of their indirect consequences, though perhaps the consequences are not as indirect as all that.

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Quite obviously literary studies have been much influenced by politics over the past twenty years or so through the formation of feminist and black and other separate studies. The Modern Language Association meetings have become a flea market, where such groups plug their wares. A friend of mine, recently back from an MLA meeting in Houston, himself a man educated at Columbia by professors of the urbanity and intellectual suavity of Lionel Trilling, Marjorie Hope Nicolson, and Jacques Barzun, reported on this meeting, sighed, and of his own career said: "It's not what I had in mind, not what I had in mind at all."

Politics, along with compartmentalizing literary studies into feminist this and radical that, has also made possible a general lowering of standards, so that now it is *de rigueur* not only to teach contemporary writers but even to teach not very good ones. Nobody quite knows what goes on in the classroom, or how many teachers, in a radical confusion over what constitutes academic freedom, simply push a political line in their teaching. Such a teacher at my own university, for example, finds Walt Whitman to be a racist, William Carlos Williams a sexist. Given time and his talent for original discovery I am sure he will one day announce that Marianne Moore was never quite sound on disarmament. Twenty or so years ago he would have been told by senior professors to knock off the politics and teach the books. Today even the senior professors are fearful of interfering with what they wrongly construe to be his academic freedom to push his own rather dopey political line.

But the rot, at university literature departments, goes deeper. I think a great many teachers of literature now operate with shot confidence. They seem to believe less and less that what they are doing is in any way central, or even of much importance; and not to believe that what one is doing is of importance is to invite demoralization. One sign of this demoralization can be found in the rise in recent years of structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction in university literature departments. This is not the place to discuss the merits of such idea-systems or the quality of the works that they have produced. But what can be mentioned briefly—and I think can be agreed upon—is that the adoption of these systems by teachers of literature represents a further professionalization of the study of literature in America, a further drawing in toward parochial interests and drawing away from the notion that literature, in its moral and social implications, is important to all educated people. Literature, after all, was once where the moral imagination got its very best workout. The lines between literature and life were assumed to be intertwined, which was one of the chief reasons that literature repaid study. In the human record of significant utterance and events, it was literature that supplied the italics.

As for this tendency in literary studies, in a recent issue of the (London) *Times Literary Supplement* one of its proponents, the Yale professor Paul de Man, calls it "the return to philology." Hans Aarsleff has remarked about 19th-century philology that "it appeared to satisfy every article of scientific faith in objectivity and disengagement from ideology." I suspect that among our new philologists the disengagement from ideology may be part of the attraction of structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction. (Yet, as someone recently asked, "How is it no one deconstructs Karl Marx?")

Not that ideologists of the Left are missing among the literary theorists. A critic like Edward Said, much honored in what English teachers call the "profession," can blithely write about "a whole world manipulated by every variety of ahistorical consumerism, whose ethnocentrism and mendacity promise the impoverishment and oppression of most of the globe," and can regret that "in American literary studies there has not in the past quarter-century been enough work of major historical scholarship that can be called 'revisionist.'" A strong case has been made by Gerald Graff that the new textual criticism has a large ideological component. "Roland Barthes," Graff notes, "goes so far as to assert that all language is 'quite simply fascist.'" Beneath all those literary-critical obfuscations and obscurations of the new New Criticism, one can now begin to hear the old familiar hum of axes being ground.

Because cliché leftism has not thus far been directly confronted, American literary culture in our time seems sadly thinned out. Twenty-five years ago many of the most interesting minds of the day were those of literary men: figures such as Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, and F. R. Leavis. There was also, in those days, quite a respectable second line of literary men, among them Yvor Winters, Allen Tate, Philip Rahv, Newton Arvin, F. O. Matthiessen, Richard Chase, and R. P. Blackmur. Comparable figures, of whatever political coloration, are not around today. Nor are they likely to arise, at least so long as present trends toward cliché-laden leftism on the one hand and English-department professionalism on the other continue to dominate the creation and the study of literature. For those who care about literature, a very great deal is thus at stake in the future tendency of our politics.

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Books in Review

Development

THE DESTRUCTION OF A CONTINENT: AFRICA AND INTERNATIONAL AID. By KARL BORGIN and KATHLEEN CORBETT. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 216 pp. $14.95.*

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT AID: GROWTH, POVERTY, AND GOVERNMENT. By MELVYN B. KRAUSS. *McGraw-Hill. 208 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN O'SULLIVAN

SOME years ago Sir Keith Joseph, the British Tory politician, was addressing a local constituency meeting when a man rose and asked what his views were on foreign aid. Sir Keith gave a characteristically anguished reply. He had always been a supporter of aid as the rich man's duty to the poor. But doubts had lately crept in. He had read the criticisms of aid advanced by Professor P.T. Bauer—that it retarded economic development and strengthened oppressive governments in recipient countries. These were powerful arguments. He was almost convinced. But he could not forget the duty of charity. What did the questioner think?

"I am Professor Bauer," replied the man.

And for a long time it seemed that, where criticism of aid was concerned, P.T. Bauer was talking to himself. A consensus that aid is a "good thing" held almost universal sway politically and academically. Lately, however, Sir Keith's doubts have been widely echoed. The undeniable failure of economies (like that of Tanzania) which have received lavish amounts of aid, the increasingly predatory character of Third World demands for an international transfer of resources, and the belated discovery that many recipient governments are anti-Western despotisms have induced a skeptical mood in the West. In response to this mood, books, pamphlets, and articles criticizing aid policies, and often acknowledging Bauer's influence, have begun to appear in large numbers. Those under review are two very different examples.

Karl Borgin and Kathleen Corbett are Europeans, respectively a Norwegian scientist and an English scientific photographer, who have lived in Africa for the past twenty-five years. From this experience, they have written a passionately indignant, occasionally slapdash diatribe excoriating the "superbureaucrats" and "aid fanatics" who, in their view, have squandered large sums on futile development conferences, wasted scarce resources on ill-conceived aid projects, and imposed inappropriate models of development on African countries. To these errors they attribute such African problems as declining agriculture, expanding capital cities with huge slums, corruption, and the threat of famine. These are serious charges. Are they sustained?

A strong case is certainly made that the senior levels of bureaucracy in aid agencies and UN bodies exist in a fantasy world of grandiose rhetoric unrelated to African realities. For example, among eighty-seven contributors to four major aid studies—including the report of the highly prestigious commission headed by Willy Brandt to investigate North-South relations—there was "only one technologist and not a single agriculturalist." It is hardly surprising, therefore, that fads take hold.

A good instance is "appropriate technology." Who can define it satisfactorily? The German Appropriate Technology Exchange (GATE) came up with this unrevealing explanation: "By an appropriate technology we mean a technology which, in the context of development measures, is appropriate to the natural economic and social conditions prevailing locally." Yet despite such vague and perhaps meaningless definitions, "appropriate technology" remains a serious topic of discussion at innumerable international conferences. And the one institution that actually does transfer appropriate technology to developing countries, namely the multinational company, remains the target of the hostility of aid agencies and the UN.

It is also true that aid is frequently misdirected. The authors cite the obsession of international agencies with major road-building programs and with "infrastructure" projects in general. These projects are carried on with modern imported road-building equipment which is never fully utilized, often breaks down in the tropical heat, and is finally abandoned to rust. Yet roads can be built with simple hand tools and there are millions of unemployed Africans who could usefully provide the labor.

So far, so reasonable. But what of the charge that Africans after independence were "forced" by Western politicians, international-aid organizations, and the UN to adopt an alien model of economic development? Given the attraction that such symbols of modernity as a national airline have for African elites, it seems an unconvincing argument. Surely a modern economy was seen as another attribute of national independence—and aid a short cut to achieving it. Any attempt to persuade new African leaders to follow a distinctively African path that would take hundreds of years, as Borgin and Corbett advocate, would be regarded by them as intolerable racial condescension.

Similarly, the authors claim altogether too much discredit for aid. It cannot be reasonably held responsible for all the ills of modern Africa, such as corruption, ever-growing slums, and desertification. Admittedly, aid has contributed to these problems by increasing the rewards of political activity, or by promoting an unbalanced and inappropriate development, and it has also encouraged and prolonged

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such misguided policies as expelling productive groups or restricting the inflow of private capital. But the policies themselves have arisen out of domestic factors, such as long-standing racial antagonisms or the need to favor tribal groups connected with the national elite, and would have been attempted even in the absence of aid.

There is one problem, however, to which aid has significantly contributed. As Borgin and Corbett rightly argue, Western medical science has added to the rise in Africa's population (with its attendant problems of slums and the threat of famine) by prolonging life expectancy. But is this really so deplorable? If more children survive the first years of life, and adults live five or six years longer than they did a generation ago, it is surely perverse to regard that as a failure of some kind. This would remain true even if some of the survivors were to die in famines several years later. And that might not happen if, in the intervening period, either technological advances, or a change in the birth rate, or the adoption of modern agricultural methods so altered the ratio of population to resources that people could survive for a reasonable life span. Although population certainly *poses* problems, it is not itself a problem but a benefit.

To ATTRIBUTE such dire consequences to aid is simply another variant of the familiar argument that everyone is to blame for the problems of developing countries except the peoples and governments who live there. In contrast to such arguments, Melvyn Krauss has written a fascinating book on the causes of economic development in which aid is scarcely mentioned—and then is given its proper weight as a contributory drawback. In unusually sprightly language for an economist, he reviews the comparative success of economies which have followed broadly free-market policies—notably the "Gang of Four" of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea—versus those which have tried the more orthodox model of economic planning and state intervention. His conclusion is that excessive government in both the Northern industrialized countries and, especially, in Southern Less Developed Countries (LDC's) is the principal cause of poor economic performance in the Third World.

In the course of this book, Krauss knocks down a number of common but fallacious assumptions. Take, for instance, the argument that public-sector investment is of critical importance to development because it sets the framework for subsequent manufacturing investment. This is wrong historically. As P.T. Bauer has pointed out, infrastructure develops in the course of economic progress, not ahead of it. The infrastructure argument also assumes that government will know what sort of development is going to occur, and where. Yet the Third World is equipped with underused airports, fine roads on which no cars travel, and new capital cities carved out of the bush which inhabitants have to be forced to visit. Such "infrastructure" is actually a drain on the private sector.

A second argument for a large public sector is that, even where capitalist policies produce economic growth, they do so at the cost of increased inequality and a decline in the standard of living of the poorest. This argument has been generally accepted in the case of the "Brazilian miracle." But as Krauss demonstrates, an analysis of the absolute incomes of poor people and other groups in Brazil during the 60's and early 70's shows that: (a) the income of *every* income class rose; (b) there was a small decline in the fraction of the economically active population below the poverty line; (c) the percentage increase in income for those below the poverty line was greater than the increase for those not in poverty, perhaps even twice as great; and so on. Although some measurements of inequality increased during the "miracle," the poor became better off both absolutely and relatively.

A third common fallacy is that the need in LDC's to boost exports, limit imports, and accumulate foreign currency justifies policies of tariff protection and import substitution. Again, however, the evidence shows that the most outstanding export performance records are enjoyed by countries with non-protectionist policies. According to a World Bank study by Bela Balassa, South Korea saw its share of exports in manufacturing output rise from 1 percent in 1960 to 16 percent in 1966 to 41 percent in 1973; Singapore's figures went from 11 percent to 20 percent to 43 percent respectively; and Taiwan from 9 percent to 19 percent to 50 percent. On the other hand, countries like India, Chile, and Uruguay, which followed protectionist policies, saw their share of exports decline over this period.

Especially interesting here is the relationship of aid to export performance in the case of Taiwan and South Korea. Between 1962 and 1970, the U.S. cut off substantial foreign aid to these countries. They accordingly had to switch from their autarchic import-substitution policy (which aid had financed) to an outward-looking trade liberalism. The effects were remarkable. From 1962 to 1970, Taiwan's exports rose from 13.2 percent of GNP to 31.1 percent; and South Korea's from 5.2 to 15 percent. Would this ever have happened if aid had continued?

To complete his case against big government, Krauss makes the paradoxical point that LDC's with the lowest marginal tax rates have also enjoyed the most rapid rises in public-sector consumption. The missing link here is that they also have had the highest growth rates, and have therefore been able to finance more public spending painlessly from a higher national income. The most striking example he gives is that of Singapore, which recently decided to *reduce* personal income-tax rates because the tax system was generating more revenue than was required to cover expenditures.

To counter an obvious objection, it should be stressed that Krauss does not confine his comparisons to East Asia. He points out that in West Africa, for instance, Ghana has followed policies of high taxation and protectionism, whereas the Ivory Coast has adopted low taxes and free

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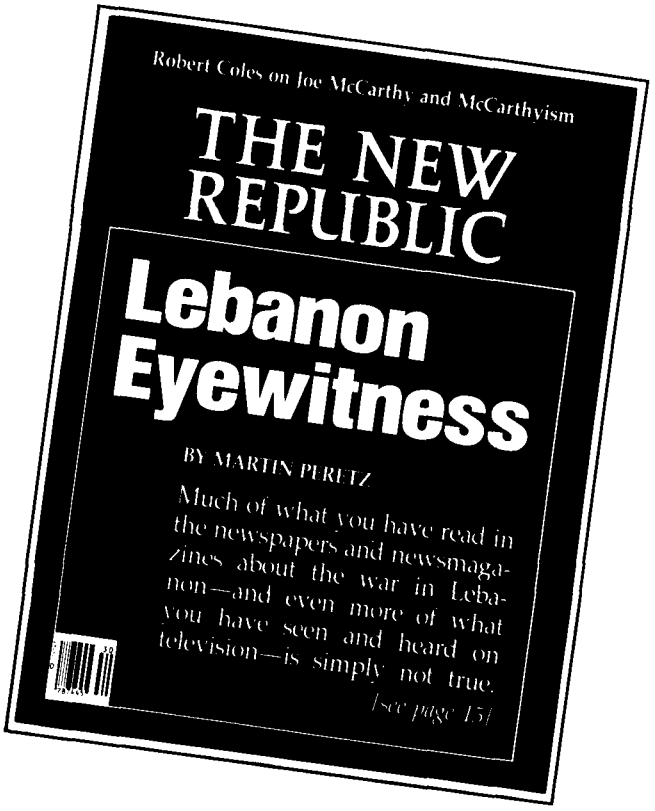
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/see page 15/

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trade. How has each fared? During the 60's, the Ivory Coast's growth rate averaged 8 percent, compared to Ghana's paltry 2 percent. And, between 1970 and 1979, the comparison was still more skewed, with the Ivory Coast averaging 6.7 percent and Ghana a negative .1 percent.

ALTHOUGH the progress of LDC's rests mainly in their own hands, the West can still help. But how? The Brandt Report's answer is that the West should transfer resources on a regular basis to the Third World. As Krauss points out, however, this assumes poverty to be a permanent and non-correctable condition of developing peoples. Since Western countries were once poor and rose to prosperity without aid, there is no warrant for this assumption. As against the transfer of income, therefore, he proposes the "transfer of prosperity," i.e., the transfer of the *ability* to produce wealth.

This transfer takes place in three ways: migration, private-investment outflows, and technology transfer and trade. As wages rise in the rich countries, workers from other areas emigrate there, capital migrates to take advantage of lower labor costs elsewhere, and cheaper goods are imported. All of these processes tend to stimulate industrial development, increase employment, and raise wages in the poorer countries.

The trouble is that these same developments create problems in the richer countries. As capital shifts from declining industries to more capital-intensive ones, companies decline and unemployment rises. This gives rise to pressure for such devices as migration control, restrictions on the export of capital, and protective tariffs. Although none of these devices is effective if imposed by itself, the transfer of prosperity *can* be restricted if protectionist devices are simultaneously employed against all three flows of labor, capital, and goods.

A principal merit of *Development Without Aid* is that it unearths and displays the various disguised—or perhaps unintended—protectionist devices that the West now erects against the Third World. For example, subsidies to protect jobs in West European steel industries effectively prevent steel from Taiwan or Brazil from entering the local market. Or a shift of resources in a Western welfare state from private spending to expenditures on social services (which cannot be "imported" from abroad) means that LDC exports to that state will be lower than they would otherwise have been. Or the restrictions proposed by the Brandt Report on the multinational companies, supposedly to protect LDC's, would effectively "lock up" capital in the West and prevent its migrating to create industry and employment. The cumulative impact of open and disguised Western protectionism on developing countries, though impossible to compute, must be considerable.

THREADED throughout this book, however, is one questionable assumption. Krauss regards economic policies and institutions as almost the only determining factors in development. The argument that there are inherent cultural factors affecting development in some LDC's he describes as "patronizing and, quite frankly, racist." When asked by a skeptic how many Hong Kongs the world could have, he replied: "As many as the world will allow itself."

In support of this, he can rightly point to the different economic performance achieved by the same peoples, presumably influenced by the same cultural factors but living under different economic regimes: West Germans outperform East Germans, and Taiwanese the Mainland Chinese. But this establishes only that sensible official policies are an important factor in development. It does not establish that they are a sufficient condition, and cultural factors nugatory. To settle that, we must examine how different groups fare under the *same* economic regime. We then discover that the Chinese outperform the Malays in Malaysia, despite discrimination in the Malays' favor, and the Asians prosper in comparison with the Africans in Kenya and Uganda.

In a recent issue of *Survey*, Jeffrey Barrett detailed the cultural biases hostile to successful entrepreneurship in Latin American societies. These include: an unwillingness to do profitable work that denotes an "inferior" status; the "envy complex" that deters the Latin poor from accumulating a modest surplus for fear of being thought "socially ambitious"; the low status of business; a pervasive lack of trust that leads entrepreneurs to overcentralize decisions and appoint subordinates on the basis of nepotism; and risk-aversion once a modest success has been achieved. It is not surprising that Latin America's successful entrepreneurs are drawn disproportionately from immigrants.

Actually, a clear distinction between economic policies and cultural factors is not possible, because cultural attitudes will usually influence official policies. For example, Barrett points out that Latin Americans with middle-class identities "avoid socially useful jobs in favor of prestigious but parasitic ones." Today's Latin American bureaucracies are notorious for being large, unproductive, and absentee.

What follows from this? Simply that obtaining economic growth in LDC's is going to be a more patchy and intractable problem than merely demonstrating that certain statist policies do not work. The "magic of the marketplace" cannot transform every Chad into a Hong Kong. Its promise is the distinctly limited one of a better Chad.

Getting and Spending

JEWS AND MONEY: THE MYTHS AND THE REALITY. By GERALD KREFETZ. *Ticknor & Fields. 267 pp. $13.95.*

Reviewed by LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

IN October 1974, a year after the Arabs had launched the Yom Kippur War, General George S. Brown, then chairman of the Joint

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ *is the author of* The War Against the Jews 1933-1945, The Holocaust and the Historians, *and, most recently,* On Equal Terms: Jews in America 1881-1981.

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Chiefs of Staff, addressed a Duke University law forum. He was asked what would happen if the Arabs reimposed the oil embargo which they had lifted only a few months earlier. Brown responded that if a renewed embargo should cause real hardship, Americans might do something to "set down the Jewish influence in this country." He then tried to explain what he meant by "Jewish influence." The Jews, Brown said, "own, you know, the banks in this country, the newspapers." The outcry that followed soon made General Brown regret his remarks and even deny that he meant what he had said. But the damage had been done, and not least to the General's credibility.

GERALD KREFETZ, a business writer and a financial consultant, was one of those who wondered whether General Brown's military intelligence was any better than his economic intelligence. For as Krefetz knew, the Jews do not own the banks of this country, or even its newspapers. Looking further into the subject, to find what has actually been written about the occupational structure and financial status of Jews, Krefetz soon discovered something that Jewish historians have been lamenting for well over a half-century: Jewish economic history, and especially American Jewish economic history, has long been neglected. Krefetz decided to do something about this, and *Jews and Money* is the result. It is, among other things, an attempt to explain to the likes of General Brown why Jews seem to have a talent for business and finance and why success in those fields so often appears to be theirs.

The early chapters in this book set out to demystify the Jews, to distinguish socioeconomic realities from the fevered imaginings of anti-Semites. Krefetz offers up a smattering of history and sociology, showing how Jewish culture, traditions, and values have contributed over the centuries to developing traits conducive to achievement. He mentions the discipline of delaying gratification, the stress on sobriety and moderation, the drive for education, the centrality of family and community.

Even more important than culture in determining the occupational structure of the Jews was their necessary accommodation to Gentile society. Through the centuries it was anti-Semitism that often determined the Jews' economic place, and that explains in particular the presence of Jews in banking and other financial occupations. It is a paradox and an irony that success in those very financial occupations into which Jews had been pushed by anti-Semitic pressure soon gave rise to a new manifestation of anti-Semitism sparked by envy.

But *Jews and Money* addresses itself mainly not to the historical but to the contemporary financial

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scene. It does so by spilling forth a mass of anecdotal information about Jews in a whole variety of fields in American business: banking (domestic and international), media, entertainment, discounting, gold and gems, real estate. In addition, Krefetz relates many entertaining stories about the role of "Jewish" money in the art world, in medicine, and in law. And amid all the talk of affluence, he has even remembered the Jewish poor.

It would be pleasant to report that Krefetz has done his work well; regrettably he has not. Nevertheless, his book should be welcomed as an ambitious and courageous attempt to tackle a subject that is obsessively compelling to anti-Semites and consequently threatening to many Jews. Money, as Emerson noted long ago, is hardly spoken of in parlors without apology. When it comes to Jews and money, one is in a minefield where any rash step may endanger one's life. Whatever his book's shortcomings, Krefetz has managed to avoid disaster with admirable aplomb.

Jews and Money lacks discipline and coherence, and most of all an index. The book's pages are littered with names of businessmen and their firms, but it is well-nigh impossible to find them again when one needs them. Some names surface repeatedly, yet such repetition does not augment knowledge or enhance insight. What is worse, not all of Krefetz's "Jewish" businessmen are even Jewish. The late Charles Bluhdorn, for instance, chairman of the board of Gulf & Western, whose name Krefetz frequently mentions and consistently misspells, denied that he was Jewish.

This raises the first fundamental problem in exploring the whole thorny question of Jews and money. One must decide who is a Jew. Once that has been settled, one needs criteria for evaluating the impact that an individual's Jewish identity may have had on his business character and business career. How does one go about this? Apart from the highly speculative and prejudicial theories of Max Weber and Werner Sombart about the alleged Jewish proclivity for financial enterprise and the alleged compatibility of Judaism with capitalism, we do not have reliable data from which to draw valid conclusions about these questions. Business history is altogether a fairly young discipline, and Jewish business history an infant.

Gathering the requisite raw material would entail in the first place a systematic collection of biographies. Then one would want to look at an individual's Jewishness or lack of it, to determine how his origins, his upbringing, his connections, and his loyalties may have shaped his character and personality. In pursuing such a study, one would want to consider how Jewish values and ethical traditions become internalized and embodied in behavior. A rewarding case study here might be that of Bernard Bergman, an erstwhile Orthodox rabbi and nursing-home operator, who became notorious in the 1970's for his unlawful financial manipulations and for the abuse to which he exposed the old and the sick in his nursing home. (Krefetz devotes twelve informative but unsystematic pages to him.)

IN ADDITION to the Jewish aspect, there is also the Gentile side of the business world in which the Jew functions. Gentile attitudes and, more importantly, Gentile behavior toward Jews affect the extent and even the nature and limits of the Jewish businessman's financial activities.

Consider in this regard Saul Philip Steinberg, whom Krefetz cites to belie the myth of Jewish finanical power. Steinberg's meteoric rise began in the 1960's. He had the innovative idea of leasing computers to businesses (this was long before the advent of the microcomputer). Starting with a few thousand dollars borrowed from his father, he turned his firm, Leasco Data Processing Equipment Corporation, into a multimillion-dollar business. In 1968 he acquired Reliance Insurance Company, which had some $700 million in assets. Among them were 200 shares in Chemical Bank, the sixth largest commercial bank in the country. In 1969, when no con-

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glomerate had yet managed to acquire a bank, Steinberg launched an attempted takeover of Chemical.

But Chemical was determined to resist, as the bank's director wrote to Steinberg, "with all the means at our command, and they might turn out to be considerable." They were indeed. For one, Nelson Rockefeller, then Governor of New York, requested the state legislature to enact a new law to prevent the takeover of a commercial bank. Still more devastating were Chemical's stock manipulations. Chemical had succeeded in acquiring a considerable number of shares of Leasco stock which it then unloaded on the market. By the end of the year Leasco stock had dropped to half of its value. Steinberg knew that he had been beaten.

Krefetz speculates:

> Were Chemical's actions anti-Semitic? The bank's motivation was probably more a reaction to a parvenu than a conscious act of prejudice. Still, one cannot help recalling that within a few short years OPEC princes and Japanese trusts were openly buying American banks without significant opposition. Was it the Jew that infuriated Chemical, the act of lèse majesty, or the work of an outsider?

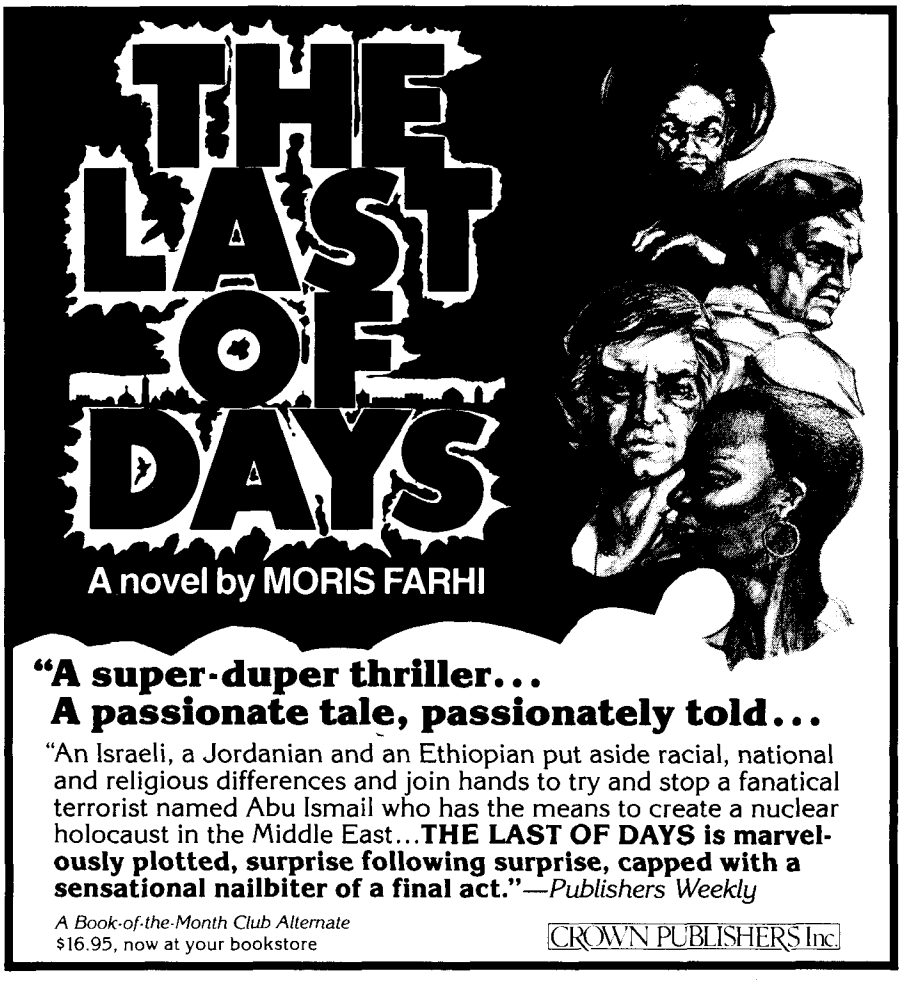
One of the more beguiling aspects of Krefetz's subject is that touching on philanthropy. Do wealthy Jews give to Jewish causes? Krefetz devotes a chapter, "Tithes That Bind," to the question, but it is a disappointing scramble of unrelated fragments on the idea of charity in the Jewish tradition, strategies of Jewish fund-raising, statistics about Jewish giving, and so forth. Again, none of this is done systematically or well.

Like most rich people, wealthy Jews often invest their money to expand their own businesses and thus make more money. Also, like most rich people, they use their money to buy their hearts' desires. But the Jewish rich have not been as conspicuous in their habits of consumption as anti-Semitic stereotypes would have it. (The rising middle class as a whole, and definitely not Jews alone, fits those stereotypes.) Indeed *Arab* consumption in the Western world has by far outstripped the capacity of the anti-Semitic imagination to depict vulgar ostentation and extravagance. Arab spenders make even William Randolph Hearst seem austere.

Besides investing their money and spending some of it on themselves, Jews also use it to do good. They do good not only for the Jewish community, but perhaps even more so for American society at large. No one has yet tried to piece together the exact facts and figures of their phenomenal contribution to this country's social-welfare network, its cultural institutions, and its scientific and educational establishments. In fact, some wealthy Jews give only or primarily to such institutions, scanting Jewish philanthropic needs. The late Joseph Hirshhorn, for instance, who made his fortune in gold and uranium mining, and who in his lifetime gave his enormous collection of contemporary art to the United States, was not notably a contributor to Jewish institutions.

Then there are those wealthy Jews who use their money to do what *they* consider to be good for America. Max Palevsky, for instance, having made his fortune in computers, has spent some of it backing Left-liberal causes, the latest being a new journal, *democracy*, intended to "revitalize liberalism in America." In recent years Palevsky has distanced himself from the Jewish community, and in fact the beneficiaries of his largesse tend to be indifferent, if not overtly hostile, to Jewish interests.

What about philanthropy for Jewish causes? For some reason Jewish hospitals have always managed to attract the benefactions of Jews not otherwise committed to their coreligionists. Among the considerable number of wealthy Jews who do care—sometimes passionately—about the Jewish commu-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nity, the cause of Israel is obviously at the top of their philanthropic agenda. Many—perhaps more now than formerly—attend a synagogue and contribute to its maintenance. Some give to Jewish education and Jewish cultural pursuits. Many are deeply involved in Jewish communal affairs. Some are even prepared to use their wealth and the influence it brings on behalf of Jewish interests.

Among those listed in "The Forbes Four Hundred" (*Forbes*, September 13, 1982) are many whose personal participation in the affairs of the Jewish community and whose philanthropy have made a difference to their local Jewish communities, to national Jewish organizations, to Judaism, Jewish culture, and scholarship in the United States, and to the vitality of Israel. To name only a few: Arthur B. Belfer (oil and real estate), Morton Blaustein (oil—inherited), Max M. Fisher (oil refining, real estate), Morton L. Mandel (Premier Industrial Corporation), Laurence A. Tisch (Loews Corporation), and Jack D. Weiler (real estate).

Yet money does not seem to go as far today as it once did. The fabled names of the past that come to mind in this connection are Sir Moses Montefiore and Baron Maurice de Hirsch, in the 19th century, and Jacob Schiff shortly thereafter —not the Rothschilds, whose money and influence were only rarely extended to aid their fellow Jews. Sir Moses Montefiore intervened on behalf of the Jews with kings, sultans, and czars, and lavished his money on Jewish causes, especially in the Holy Land. Hirsch almost singlehandedly underwrote the mass migration of the Jews from czarist Russia to the United States. Schiff's beneficence—toward Jewish and non-Jewish philanthropic causes alike—was spectacular. And in the exercise of influence surely nothing was more spectacular than the refusal of Schiff's firm—Kuhn, Loeb and Company—to float a loan for Russia when the war with Japan started in 1904. (Instead, Kuhn, Loeb contributed a major share toward a loan to the Japanese, which no doubt helped them to defeat Russia.)

It was czarist anti-Semitism that turned Schiff into a belligerent against the Russian regime. Those were still the days when an individual fortune could govern political destinies. Nowadays, it seems that not even the bottomless pit of Arab oil money can determine the outcome of the Iran-Iraq war.

TIMOTHY's preachment that "love of money is the root of all evil" was intended to sustain the Christian tradition of asceticism and otherworldliness. The Jewish tradition, by contrast, has been leavened by temperance and this-worldliness. Koheleth's cynical observation that "money answereth all things" is more useful as a social guide in this world than Timothy's ethos of self-denial. In their historical encounters with the Christian world, the Jews have often found that money can mean the difference between extinction and survival.

Islam vs. Christianity

THE MUSLIM DISCOVERY OF EUROPE. By BERNARD LEWIS. *Norton. 350 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by J. B. KELLY

BERNARD LEWIS has probably done more to foster Western understanding of the Islamic world in our day than any other contemporary scholar. His *Arabs in History* is a minor classic, his *Emergence of Modern Turkey* is the standard authority on the subject, while his contributions to the historiography of medieval and modern Islam, not least in his capacity as co-editor of the monumental second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, stand as testimony to the formidable range and depth of his learning. He is that rarity in a technological age, a true polymath—or perhaps in his case, a polyhistor. Not only is he in easy command of a dozen languages, Oriental and European, but he also possesses considerable knowledge of a diversity of subjects.

It would be difficult to call to mind anyone so well equipped as he to illuminate the theme of his latest book, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, which, as its title suggests, is a survey of relations between the Muslim and Christian worlds from the rise of Islam in the 7th century to the eclipse of its political, military, and economic fortunes in the 18th, viewed not from the familiar standpoint of Europe but from that of the Muslim peoples to the south and east. The focus of the book is on the high Middle Ages and the early modern era. Among the many topics treated are religious rivalry, social and cultural contacts, war and diplomacy, science, literature, economics, and, not least, the art of translation and the function of intermediaries.

The record is one of almost unrelieved misunderstanding and hostility between the two worlds. Leaving to one side Christian Europe's share of responsibility for the persistence of this condition of mutual antagonism, it is clear from what Lewis writes that the condition was virtually assured from the outset by the Muslim interpretation of God's will and the destiny He had ordained for humanity at large. To the pious Muslim the world appeared as divided into two entities—the *dar al-Islam*, or the House of Islam, which embraced all the lands in which Muslims lived, and the *dar al-Harb*, or the House of War, in which resided the rest of mankind. (The European geographical classification of countries, nations, and boundaries was not a Muslim perception. Not until the 19th century did Muslim governments begin to entertain the concept of defining sovereignty in territorial terms.) According to Islamic law, between the *dar al-Islam* and the *dar al-Harb* there could exist only a state of unremitting warfare, which would not cease until all mankind had embraced Islam and submitted to the will of God, as revealed to the last and greatest of His prophets, Muhammad.

WHAT this dogma signified for the course of Muslim-Christian relations in the thousand years following the Prophet's death is explained by

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Lewis in one of the many striking passages in his book:

> The Muslim doctrine of successive revelations culminating in the final mission of Muhammad led the Muslim to reject Christianity as an earlier and imperfect form of something which he, himself, possessed in its final, perfect form, and to discount Christian thought and Christian civilization accordingly. After the initial impact of eastern Christianity on Islam in its earliest period, Christian influences, even from the high civilization of Byzantium, were reduced to a minimum. Later, by the time that the advance of Christendom and the retreat of Islam had created a new relationship, Islam was crystallized in its ways of thought and behavior and had become impervious to external stimuli, especially those coming from the millennial adversary in the West.

From this conviction of the immutability of God's purpose, and the divinely appointed role of the Muslim community in accomplishing it, it was but a short step in the Muslim consciousness to disdaining the European peoples as infidel barbarians, unworthy of notice except as objects of prey. Even the Ottoman Turks, who, as Lewis emphasizes, were the champions *sans pareils* of Islam and who expanded and defended the frontiers of Islam against Christendom for five long centuries, felt it unnecessary for the greater part of that time to display more than an infrequent flicker of interest in anything other than the military attainments of their adversaries. The general Muslim opinion of Europeans during the Middle Ages was that expressed by an 11th-century *qadi* (judge) in Muslim Spain, whom Lewis quotes:

> [They] are more like beasts than like men. For those of them who live furthest to the north, between the last of the seven climates and the limits of the inhabited world, the excessive distance of the sun in relation to the zenith line makes the air cold and the sky cloudy. Their temperaments are therefore frigid, their humors raw, their bellies gross, their color pale, their hair long and lank. Thus they lack keenness of understanding and clarity of intelligence, and are overcome by ignorance and apathy, lack of discernment and stupidity. . . .

So much for the Scandinavians. The Germans did not fare much better. A Muslim visitor to Schleswig in the 10th century remarked of it: "The town has few good things or blessings. Their food consists chiefly of fish, which is plentiful. When children are born to any of them, he throws them into the sea to save the expense." There was, perhaps, a shade more regard for the French, though it was limited to their prowess in warfare and, as with other European countries, to the wealth they produced. Toward European civilization as such the true believer professed only indifference. Even the borrowings in the early centuries of Islam from the legacies of Greece and Rome were limited to translations of philosophical, medical, and scientific treatises. The literature and art of classical antiquity were dismissed as irrelevant. Intercourse between the two worlds was kept up by Europeans, who journeyed to the Muslim lands in search of trade. Over the course of time permanent European merchant communities were established in most of the major towns of the Ottoman empire. As trade, diplomacy, and war made communication in one another's languages unavoidable, it was the Europeans who undertook the task of learning Arabic, Turkish, and Persian. As a consequence, while the study of Oriental languages blossomed in European universities from the late 16th century onward, nothing remotely comparable occurred in the centers of Islamic learning.

At the root of everything, of course, lay the conflict of religions. What emerges unmistakably from the numerous, mainly Ottoman, sources quoted by Lewis is that while the Turks were prepared to tolerate Christians and Jews living

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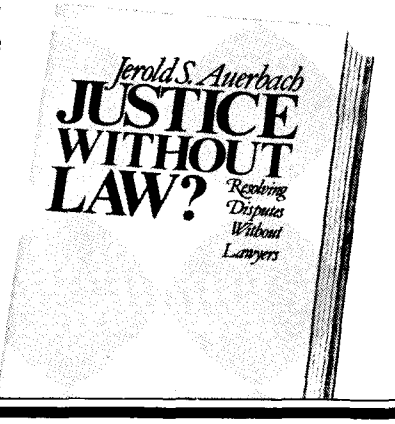

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under their rule, they exhibited toward Christendom itself perhaps even greater abhorrence and hostility than that which Christian Europe evinced toward Islam. Yet, odious though every aspect of Christendom appeared in Muslim eyes, the resurgence of European power at the end of the Middle Ages could not be ignored. Europe began to press inward upon the *dar al-Islam* from the north, while encircling it, with the discovery of the sea route to India, from the south. But perhaps the event which dealt the severest blow to Muslim complacency was the French Revolution, which initiated the spread of a secular philosophy posing a greater threat to Islamic verities than Christendom had ever done. The fear generated in the Sublime Porte ("the Threshold of the Nest of Felicity," as a 16th-century Turkish author mellifluously phrased it) is reflected in a splendid diatribe against the heretical ideas of the Enlightenment embodied in a proclamation issued by the Ottoman sultan to his subjects in 1798. It began, "The French nation (may God devastate their dwellings and abase their banners, for they are tyrannical infidels and dissident evildoers)," and went on to excoriate the rulers of revolutionary France for denying the validity of the Koran and the Scriptures and for filling the minds of men with depraved and ludicrous notions about equality and liberty.

Islam's long sleep had been broken, and the awakening was to be a painful one. Yet as Lewis points out, though secularism as such was repugnant to the Muslim mind, "an ideology that was non-Christian could be considered by Muslims with a detachment which was not possible for doctrines tainted with a rival religion. In such a secular or, rather, religiously neutral ideology, Muslims might even hope to find the talisman that would give them the secrets of Western knowledge and progress without endangering their own traditions and way of life."

The judgment is in keeping with the humane and judicious spirit which informs the whole of Bernard Lewis's book. While he dispassionately anatomizes for us the mixture of bewilderment and contempt with which the Muslim world viewed Europe for more than a thousand years, at the same time he impels us toward a sympathetic understanding of the Muslim predicament at the close of that era, as the triumph of the infidel barbarians seemed to mock the Creator's grand design for mankind. His book is a delight to read. He writes with grace, clarity, and wit, and flatters our comprehension by wearing his wealth of learning lightly. Would that there were more modern historians of the Middle East like him.

The Unfree

SLAVERY AND SOCIAL DEATH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY. By ORLANDO PATTERSON. *Harvard University Press. 511 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by ROBERT NISBET

SLAVERY, this book demonstrates, far from being a "peculiar institution," comes very close to being, along with kinship and religion, a universal one. "There is no region on earth that has not at some time harbored the institution. Probably there is no group of people whose ancestors were not at one time slaves or slaveholders." Moreover, slavery has been not only compatible with but indispensable to some of the greatest, most creative civilizations in world history.

Despite the abundance of scholarly writing on slavery during the past several decades, until now no serious work has been addressed to its global dimension. Orlando Patterson, who is a professor of sociology at Harvard and the author of a highly regarded study of slav-

ROBERT NISBET *is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities, Emeritus, Columbia University. His books include* Twilight of Authority, History of the Idea of Progress, *and, most recently,* Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary.

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ery in the Caribbean, deals with slavery in all the types of society in which it has been present—preliterate, Asian, and Western European, from ancient Greece to the American South. Although I have reservations about a few of his concepts and generalizations, I have none about the book's major contribution, which is the assembling in logical and readable form of data drawn from dozens of cultures and civilizations. This is a work of solid scholarship that will undoubtedly stand a long time before any effort is made to supersede it.

Two major types of slavery are distinguished by Patterson. The first is found in societies in which "slavery attained marked structural significance, ranging from those in which it was important for cultural, economic, or political reasons, or a combination of all three, through those in which it was critical though not definitive, to those in which it was the determinative institution." These are the societies on which the greatest abundance of information exists; they include ancient Greece and Rome, the deep South in the United States prior to the Civil War, many of the Arabic cultures, the African states of the Sudan, the Caribbean nations (whether under Spanish or British rule), Thailand, and Korea. As Patterson shows us in detail, there have been a great many such societies in world history.

The second kind of slave society is one in which slavery, though highly visible, does not play such a strong institutional role as in the first. It is more of an eddy than a main current. Why study slavery in such a small compass? Patterson's answer is interesting: "If one confines oneself to major cases only, to the structurally important cases, one remains unable to answer what is perhaps the most serious structural problem, namely how and under what conditions the process in question ceases being unimportant and becomes important." Among the many examples of small-scale slavery dealt with are the Hebrews of the Kingdom of Judah, the Aztecs, the Comanche Indians, the Ifugao of the Philippines, and the Ibo of central Nigeria.

There is one form of slavery that Patterson should not have omitted: the penal slave systems of the totalitarian states of the 20th century. The Soviet Union leads them, and has done so since the very beginning of Soviet Communism. What Lenin commenced, Stalin brought to fullness. Patterson does deal with penal slavery, and refers to its incidence in 17th- and 18th-century Russia, but that slavery was moderate compared with the Gulag Archipelago. Moreover, totalitarian penal slavery meets most of Patterson's criteria for the identification of the phenomenon: the ruthless uprooting of individuals from normal existence and condemnation to slave labor under limitless power; the forced separation of individuals from all contact with families and neighborhoods; absolute segregation from the social order; and the relentless degradation of persons and the destruction of individual identity—in short, the calculated manufacture of nonpersons. If, as Patterson believes, the metaphor of "social death" is useful in the understanding of historic slave societies, it is no less useful in our appreciation of the lot of the tens of millions of Russians and others who have been forced into a horrifying oblivion for alleged crimes against the state.

One of the greatest achievements of Patterson's book is the rigorous comparative method. He is no pseudo-evolutionist, using comparison for the sole purpose of contriving balloonlike stages or epochs through which "mankind" is said to have evolved. For Patterson, the purpose of comparison is to illuminate the analysis of some distinctive feature of slavery, and thus make it possible to discern genuine types of slavery and the varied mechanisms within them.

Three elements are, for Patterson, vital in true slavery. Each corresponds to a facet of domination generally—the larger social

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category in which he locates slavery—and is vivid wherever slavery is found. The first element is force or coercion, exerted whenever it is needed. Absolute power over the slave may be muted, camouflaged, or trivialized by a given master, but it is always there, waiting to be used. Second is what Patterson calls "natal alienation": alienation, that is, from all the rights and immunities enjoyed by members of the social order; alienation indeed from life in the full social and cultural sense. The third element is the loss of honor, or rather the subjection of the slave to a perpetual process of "dishonoring." The slave can have no honor in the historic sense of the word because of the origin of his status, but most of all, Patterson stresses, because he is utterly without power in society save through his master.

Thus honor and power are inseparable. Patterson is well aware of the ostensible exceptions to this pattern, and gives substantial treatment to the eunuchoid slaves who at various times, as in the Ottoman empire, have exercised extraordinary power directly over individuals, indeed over masses of subjects. He is aware too of the seemingly privileged place slaves can have, as in the status of longtime house servant, of craftsman, artist, and musician, even in the deep South where slavery was perhaps more potent a force and less trammeled by any protective law than even in ancient Rome. The literature of comedy in the ancient world has a full share of portraits of the pampered, fawned-upon slave, male and female, and of the sly ways in which the slave, technically under domination by master, is in fact the master of the master. And, finally, Patterson registers his understanding of the kinds of limitation upon complete domination of one being by another which Hegel highlighted, followed by Georg Simmel in his magisterial study of superordination and subordination, a work Patterson makes little use of though it is highly pertinent to his main argument.

But these apparent exceptions or inconsistencies notwithstanding, the fact remains, as Patterson argues forcefully, that they can only mask the residual power that is confirmed by law and custom for the master alone, a power that can at any time be activated to terminate completely whatever limited powers and privileges may have been conferred upon a slave.

In many ways the most provocative and perhaps controversial element in *Slavery and Social Death* is the author's contention that slavery has been indispensable not only to the great civilizations of the past where it flourished but also to the rise of ideas of freedom. We commonly assume, Patterson argues, that slavery by its very nature could have nothing to do with freedom. But it was the existence of two classes of people, those in slavery and those not, that first led to stirrings of recognition of something that might be thought of as freedom. Moreover, in the act of freeing a slave, of making a freedman of him, as in ancient Greece, the vital difference between being unfree and free was dramatized; in time, contemplation of this difference evolved into the awareness of freedom.

Patterson states the paradox:

> Before slavery people simply could not have conceived of the thing we call freedom. Men and women in premodern, non-slaveholding societies did not, could not, value the removal of a restraint as an ideal. Individuals yearned only for the security of being positively anchored in a network of power and authority. . . . The first men and women to struggle for freedom, the first to think of themselves as free in the only meaningful sense of the term, were freedmen. And without slavery there would have been no freedom.
>
> We arrive then at a strange and bewildering enigma: are we to esteem slavery for what it has wrought, or must we challenge our conception of freedom and the value we place upon it?

BUT all this is surely too much to claim for slavery and liberation from slavery. There are other, far more substantial and widespread historical forces involved in the rise of awareness of freedom. There is, to begin with, the absolute authority of the household father in ancient times, the power to which the Romans gave the label, *patria potestas*. Among Greeks, Romans, and a good many other peoples this power was fundamental, extending as it did to matters of life and death. There were times, as in war, when sons knew the undoubtedly heady experience of liberation from the *patria potestas,* and frequent experience of this kind must have had more than a little to do with the evolution of the consciousness of freedom. Even more important, perhaps, was religion, and claims by innumerable peoples of rights to worship their own gods.

The concept of rights, especially religious rights, is vital to the emergence of the separate but closely related idea of freedom. To be given or otherwise to win the right to one's own religious practices is, in substance at least, to be given or to win the freedom to worship as one desires. I do not question the argument that liberation from slavery generated, in the minds of those liberated, some awareness, however dim, of freedom. But it is not necessary to endow slavery with the unique capacity of being the setting or necessary prelude to the human consciousness of freedom. To answer the question with which Patterson concludes his book, we are not at all obliged to "esteem slavery for what it has wrought"; we may continue to loathe it and regard it as an ugly blot on human history. Nor are we in any respect obliged to "challenge our conception of freedom and the value we place upon it."

An Evolving Epic

THE ARAB-ISRAELI WARS. By CHAIM HERZOG. *Random House. 392 pp. $20.00.*

Reviewed by ELIOT A. COHEN

THE son of a distinguished British rabbi (later Chief Rabbi of Palestine), Chaim Herzog served with the British army during World War II and then with the new Israel De-

ELIOT A. COHEN *is assistant professor of government at Harvard.*

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fense Forces, twice holding the position of director of Military Intelligence (1948-50 and 1959-62). In addition to being a soldier, he is a lawyer, a diplomat (having served as his country's ambassador to the United Nations), and a journalist, the author of several books, and a well-known commentator in the Hebrew and English press. He is thus uniquely equipped to produce an enlightening survey of the Arab-Israeli military conflict. Unfortunately, however, this book is a disappointment.

The Arab-Israeli Wars offers a workmanlike narrative of the period from 1948 through 1982, including a hastily written chapter on the recent war in Lebanon. Herzog introduces each war with a brief prologue, no more than a half-dozen pages long, and then plunges immediately into a detailed but clearly written operational account of the major campaigns and battles. His book is amply supplied with maps, and provides enough of the political background of each war to make the history understandable. Herzog describes the strategic geography of the region clearly, and identifies the major personalities on either side.

Why, then, is this such an unsatisfying book? For one thing, although this is a handy summary, Herzog's account provides no new information. Nor does it offer new insight into a remarkable thirty-five-year era of political and military history. Herzog's emphasis on the fighting means that he gives little space to all the transformations of society, politics, and institutions—in both Israel and the Arab world—that occurred in the periods in between the episodes of fighting. This inevitably deprives his work of some value, for it is impossible fully to understand war except in the largest context. Thus, Herzog's book lacks the depth of the now unfortunately outdated work of Nadav Safran, *From War to War*.

Yet even as a purely military history Herzog's book falls below the standards we should hold him to. For instance, few of the many maps are anything more than crude, two-dimensional abstractions of the battlefield, and none approaches the sophistication and topographical detail of the average U.S. Geological Survey map, much less those in the U.S. Army's Official History of World War II. This may seem to be a petty point, but in my judgment it reflects the suppressed—perhaps unconscious—disdain of the average military writer for the lay audience. Another example is the six batches of photographs included in the book, most of them of famous politicians or generals or equally well-known "human-interest" scenes. Pictures of the kind that might make the tactical descriptions more intelligible (as, again, can be found in the U.S. Army Official Histories) are completely lacking. The failing here is not, I hasten to add, Herzog's alone, but rather a fault of the genre.

Herzog could have made this military history more interesting by pursuing any number of lines of inquiry. Rather than invoking the ghost of the English writer B.H. Liddell Hart to applaud the genius of the Israeli army, he might have told us whether the Israelis learned their style of war from Liddell Hart, from the Germans, or on their own. He might have discussed the evolution of the Israeli army—today's citizen army is very different from the citizen army of 1948—and compared the new professional Israeli officer corps with its predecessors.

Herzog might also have looked more closely into the astonishing development of Arab forces, particularly those of Egypt and Syria. If the British had faced 9,000 Syrian rather than Argentine troops on East Falkland Island last summer, a very different outcome might have occurred there, a Gallipoli in the South Atlantic rather than the swift and relatively cheap triumph they had. Indeed, the transformation of the primitive, poorly officered, inadequately equipped and trained levies of Syria and Egypt into effective (if still inferior) military forces has been an impressive achievement that has still not been adequately explained. The history of the Egyptian army from 1967 to 1973 suggests that Soviet aid and advice alone do not account for this development. Neither is the answer to be found in some change in the nature of the societies opposing Israel. Many Israelis and Americans assumed in the aftermath of 1967 that an army is merely a reflection of the society from which it emerges, and that the Arabs were therefore doomed to perpetual military inferiority. The Israeli high command fell prey to this belief, and the Israel Defense Forces paid the penalty in the October 1973 war.

ISRAEL's struggle with the Arab world is an appropriate subject for an epic history. While it would be unreasonable to expect anyone to match the achievements of such master participant/historians as Polybius or Thucydides, one hoped for better from Chaim Herzog than what he has given us in this book.

Race & Economics

THE STATE AGAINST BLACKS. *By* WALTER E. WILLIAMS. *McGraw-Hill. 183 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL NOVAK

WALTER E. WILLIAMS is a professor of economics at George Mason University and a prolific writer on issues of economics and culture. This, his first book, marks a new stage in the American discussion of race, for contrary to conventional wisdom it holds the state to be not the best friend but an enemy of the economic progress of blacks.

Of the book's ten chapters, the first two analyze concepts of discrimination prevailing in elite circles, and the following eight focus on specific issues. Williams deals in two chapters with the minimum wage, which he calls "the maximum folly," and black median income. He then turns to business licensing; the taxicab industry in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.; the licensing of plumbers and electricians; the railroad industry; trucking regulation; and economic regulation by the states. In each instance, Williams documents, and illustrates with

MICHAEL NOVAK *is resident scholar in philosophy, religion, and public policy at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is* The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism.

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statistical tables, the adverse impact of state actions upon black workers and proprietors. To take one vivid example: in the 1920's, an uneducated poor person in New York could purchase a used car and operate it as a taxi; today, Williams notes, a license to do so would set him back $60,000.

The premise with which Williams begins has in its favor plain observation and accumulating evidence. While he is far from repudiating the effects of the gross denial of rights to blacks in the past, or of residual discrimination against them in the present, neither circumstance, in his view, yields "a satisfactory explanation for the *current* condition of many blacks in America." Starting from the same point, Glenn Loury of Harvard and Thomas Sowell of the Hoover Institution have used comparative ethnic materials to stress those things that blacks, like other groups, can achieve despite discrimination. What Williams adds is criticism of the state for getting in the way.

What, then, is Williams for? He argues that "the government, at various levels, can exert its authority to insure that all people have unrestricted access to legitimate markets," and that "political resources should be expended" accordingly. Such a political strategy, however, demands a change in the conventional perspective, and this he undertakes to provide in his first two chapters. Here Williams discusses cogently and succinctly the sorts of decisions involved, for instance, in purchasing a place of residence. These include, on the part of the prospective purchaser, decisions about personal expenditures to secure both public goods (schools, refuse collection, parks, and the like) and private goods (having to do with issues of taste, familiarity, and convenience). In making their choices, people tend to associate with others similarly inclined. Income, class, and culture often turn out to be stronger than race, as when both whites and blacks prefer neighbors of similar socioeconomic situation to neighbors of similar race. No simplifier, Williams writes: "We know that housing patterns depend upon at least three different factors: the first is racial discrimination; the second is economic restraints that limit the quantity and quality of housing that can be purchased; and the third is individual taste." Getting clear about all these factors and their relative strengths in time and place is a difficult but indispensable task.

Williams next tries to take some of the emotive charge out of words like "segregation" and "discrimination." Individuals constantly set themselves apart by fine discriminations: in attending theaters, preferring wines, subscribing to magazines, and the like. Williams shows how genuinely free markets tempt sinners to abandon prejudice, whereas laws imposing equal pay, or making dismissal of an employee costly, discourage the sort of economic experimentation that would end in overcoming prejudice. Local, state, and federal laws, by strangling those they are intended to help, impede the upward mobility of hardworking blacks and make it all the harder to do away with the conditions that allow discrimination to flourish.

This clear and useful book prompts a general observation. Williams is one of several black scholars who are now enriching the economic profession with fresh inquiries into culture, family, and race. Their work is bound to have an impact on future discussions of differences in "human capital" both in the United States and in the Third World. Interestingly enough, most of those engaged in this task seem to have won their intellectual freedom from prevailing conventions through the chaste libertarianism of Milton Friedman. I believe they will eventually need a stronger theory of the role of the state in questions of poverty and development. There are measures a state properly takes "to promote the general welfare" both for commerce and industry and for the poor, measures which do not impede those to be helped but empower them. The problem of the last twenty years does not lie in the turn to the state *per se* but in the nature of that turn, which was flawed. By clarifying that flaw, and its doleful consequences, Walter Williams and his colleagues are also helping us to see a better path into the future.

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Significantly, "The Jewish Year" will be sent to its owner ready for immediate display. It will be beautifully mounted on a double mat and issued in a frame of solid handrubbed walnut that has been specially designed for this work. (In view of the impressive size of the work—24″ × 30″—and the cost of comparable framing at galleries today, this is a benefit of considerable value.)

To display with pride—and enjoy

Displayed in its elegant walnut frame, this splendid work of art will enhance the decor of any room you choose for it. And there, it will be enjoyed not only for its beauty, but also for the continuing interest it stimulates...as family and friends discover its fascination, discuss its meaning, and delight in its rich detail.

"The Jewish Year" is certain to prove a source of enduring pleasure and pride—day after day, for many years to come.

Ori Sherman's works sell for up to $1000 in galleries and museums. But through this exclusive offering you can acquire "The Jewish Year"—signed and framed, together with special reference literature—for $175. You need only return the attached application form. Bear in mind, however, that the edition is limited to just 200 prints, and that applications can only be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Thus, it is recommended that you return your application as promptly as possible—and in any event, no later than April 30, 1983.

Offer good in U.S. only

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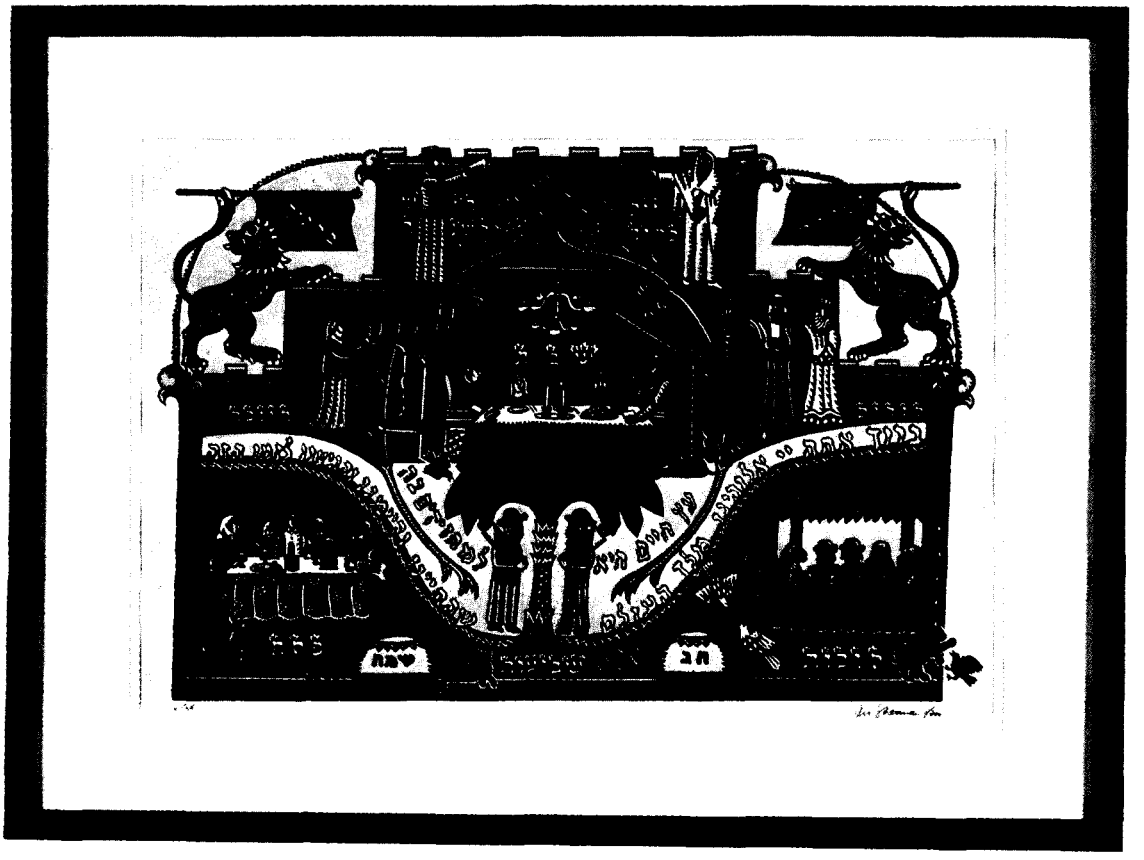

Shown reduced. Actual size of framed work is 24″ × 30″

Hand-signed original print in numbered edition of 200

The Jewish Year

by

Ori Sherman

The editors of COMMENTARY are pleased to announce the limited offering of an outstanding new work by the award-winning American artist, Ori Sherman. An original serigraph print...issued in a limited, serially numbered edition of just 200...with each print hand-signed and hand-remarqued by the artist. Readers of COMMENTARY who respond by April 30, 1983, will receive the work *custom-framed* at no additional charge.

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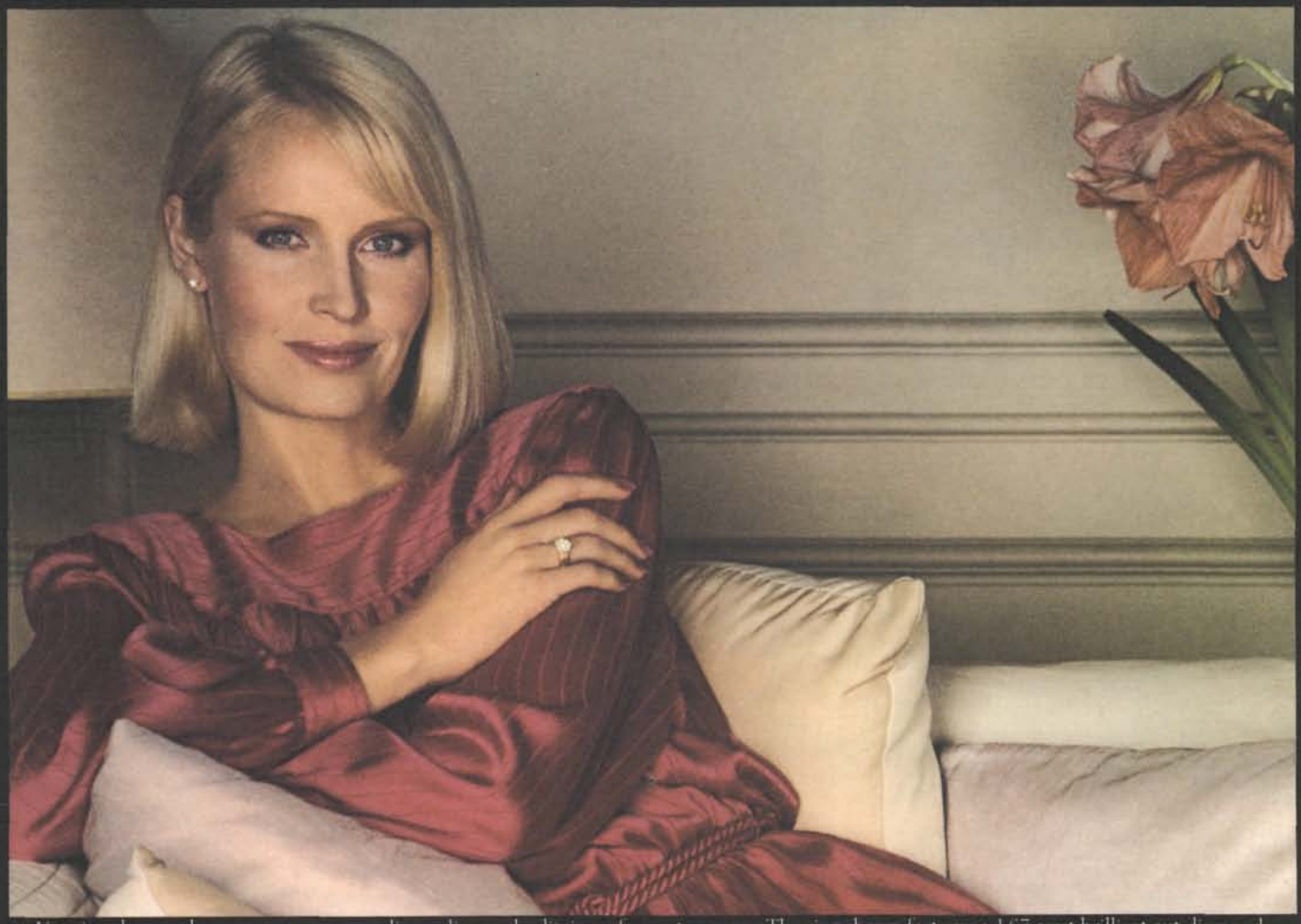
Show her she's the reason it's never been lonely at the top.



Your jeweler can show you many extraordinary diamond solitaires of a carat or more. The ring shown features a 1.67 carat brilliant cut diamond.

A carat or more—one in a million.

Every diamond is rare.
But of all diamonds found, a solitaire of a carat or more is only one in a million.

And, like love, becomes more precious with time.

A miracle among miracles.
Born from the earth. Reborn on a woman.

The extraordinary diamond of a carat or more.

Show the world you couldn't have made it without her.

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